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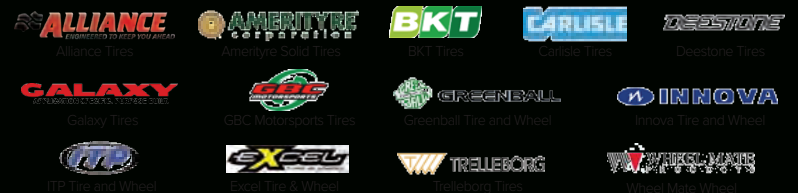
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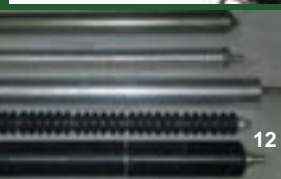
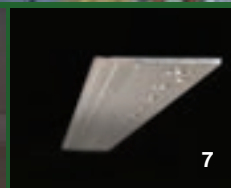
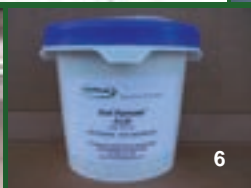
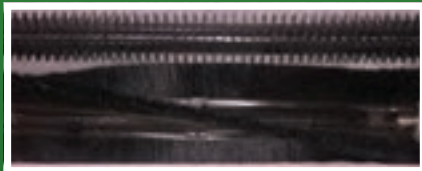
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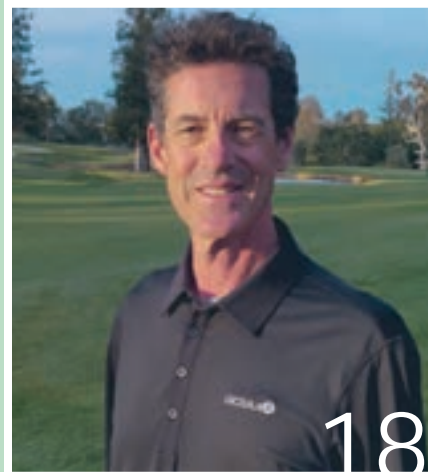
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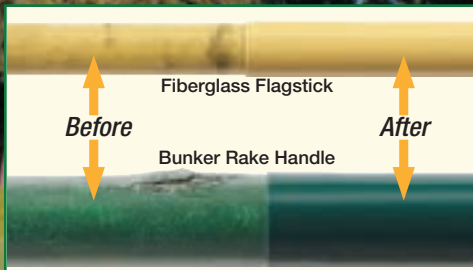
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by Patrick Simmsgeiger,
The Water King

You have a body of water. Some call it a lake, some call it a pond and some call it a pain. When you have a problem, you call a lake maintenance company to fix it. Sounds about right. This is considered reactive maintenance and while it will solve apparent problems, it does nothing to prevent time-consuming and potentially expensive situations from erupting in the first place. It's the old question of defense versus offense.

Ponds and lakes are complex features. They are not merely large swimming pools where you can get by with skimming the surface every so often. A basic understanding of water biology and aquatic ecosystems goes a long way in understanding and caring for them.

THE DO-RE-MI'S OF WATERSCAPES

In nature, balance is all-important. The amounts of elements entering a water system have to be in proportion to the amounts going out, or

being used and released by the living organisms that call that system home. Clarity, equal nourishment, definitive boundaries wherein each part flourishes in proper proportion—these are the differences between a garden and a jungle. When one life form begins to dominate an ecosystem, the balance is destroyed and destruction follows. The task for anyone managing an aquatic environment is to attain and preserve balance. This means controlling not only harmful but all substances and organisms, and counteracting destructive processes.

To no one's surprise, those processes are often man-induced. In fact, many of the products that serve us so well on land are the very ones that cause problems in our water environments. A prime example is the array of fertilizers at our disposal. These almost always contain high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous, chemicals which enrich land plants and stimulate healthy turf growth. But when they accumulate in

runoff water, either as a result of poor irrigation, rainfall, or overwatering, they cause a huge imbalance in the nearby body of water. The result will almost inevitably be an infestation of algae and aquatic weeds.

Below are some common issues that, if untreated or improperly handled, can very quickly get out of hand.

Pickle Water

The pH level is a measure of how "acidic" or "basic" the water may be and is ranked on a scale of 1 to 14 with 7 being neutral (balanced). Low numbers represent acids while high numbers indicate alkaline or salt solutions. Evaporation, field run-off, salts and minerals all affect the pH. Water circulation, aeration and the measured addition of certain chemicals can restore a pond or stream to its proper pH. A knowledgeable professional who knows what he's doing can make these assessments and apply the cure quickly.

Good Poison

Natural pesticides are good at eliminating pests and bacteria; however, too much of anything is never a good thing. Over-spraying may foul up the entire ecosystem. Stronger pesticides have the potency not only to do away with unwanted pests but, if used in high amounts, can threaten fish and wildlife as well. Good alternatives to manufactured pesticides are Enzymes, Beneficial Bacteria and Colorants. Whatever you decide to go with, it's always better to have someone on your side who can view the situation with the keen eye of professional experience.

Paint-Brush Water

Most algae are actually harmless and, in small amounts, an important presence in water ecosystems. But when there is an aquatic surplus of nutrients, or when eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) occurs, algae invade the whole area. Algae blooms cloud the water, giving it a dirty, turbid appearance and the smell

of rotting garbage. Besides cutting off the photosynthetic process of other plants, algae suck up oxygen when cells die and certain kinds release toxins—making them potentially fatal to plants, fish and wildlife.

Organic Debris

Organisms and debris, such as tree leaves and grass clippings, very easily accumulate on the bottom and sides of an aquatic system. As they decompose, they become food for other organisms, wanted and unwanted. In no time at all, your waterscape may become clogged with excess plant life, not to mention bacteria and fungi colonies. All of this then becomes food for yet more organisms. Only vigorous intervention can interrupt this vicious cycle.

Stagnation

It's deadly, for humanity and nature. Study and smell any stagnant pool of water and you'll find positive proof of it. Circulation is essential to a healthy aquatic environment. It aerates the water, inhibits unwanted plant growth and prevents your pond from becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other pests.

Reclaimed Water

If you've got it, you know. Reclaimed water is overloaded with salts and nutrients and has an unmistakable strange odor and a pea-green, soupy color.

OFFENSE APPROACH

Because so much natural science is involved, it may sound as though what you really need is a biologist or even a chemist to look over your water system. But the truth is that both of these will fall short in the long run. A biologist is not usually an expert who can identify the specific needs required by each unique

aquatic ecosystem. He or She may not specialize in blueprints, planning, or mechanical engineering, nor can they make wise recommendations to ensure the water systems longevity.

A Certified Lake Manager (CLM), on the other hand, can do all those things and more! They have undergone a rigorous training program and curriculum specific to lake and watershed management relating to financial, regulatory, and even social aspects. CLM's have the skill set necessary to manage and maintain large water bodies, are qualified to make proper assessments and prescribe actions to improve or protect the condition of the entire water system. And if they have been in the business long enough, they have had multiple years of experience and many opportunities to expand their knowledge, because a true professional is always pushing the boundaries of what they know, maximizing their ability and expertise.

Hopefully, now, you see there's much more to water features than a trip to the local fish store and tool shed. In fact, so much is involved, scientifically, biologically, mechanically, and environmentally, that it can be overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be. For the best results, lakes, streams and ponds require proactive maintenance: a preventative approach that works in conjunction with the existing ecosystem in order to prevent overbearing and costly situations from developing down the road.

Lake maintenance companies with a reactive approach hire personnel who can only—react. All action is deferred until after the problem has erupted, not before. By then the water's surface may be a carpet of strange, slimy globs of green stuff. Huge mats of bizarre grass may start floating up from the bottom, and the water become

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weirdly discolored. If that happens, it won't be much longer before pumps cease functioning or start groaning and choking. Waterfalls might slow to a trickle. One problem after another is sure to arise. Obviously, the thing to do is call, shout, and scream for a maintenance person, but realize that you are treating the symptoms. Not the cause or causes. And unless those are dealt with, the problems will be back.

On the other hand, a company with a proactive approach trains their personnel not only to solve problematic issues but also how to prevent them. Proactive maintenance personnel are forward thinkers. They understand the root of problems and are able to eliminate costly situations before they occur or become visible.

For example, lake maintenance professionals monitor and

measure the growth of aquatic plants, much like Arborists and Pest Control Advisors (PCA's) and are aware of seasonal changes and developments. Aquatic plants require careful watch even during the dormant winter months, otherwise an expected summer bloom may turn into a tangled nightmare. Water plants have a tendency to grow wild and out of control, creating yet another need for timely and expensive reactive restoration. But rather than reaching for the shears, call a proactive professional who will figure out what caused the overgrowth. A possibility may be the unseen accumulation of sludge accumulating at the base of your aquatic ecosystem. Instead of just cutting away at the overgrowth, a proactive professional will treat the sludge.

Aquatic ecosystems encompass more fields than

biology alone; they almost always require a mechanical knowledge as well. Proactive maintenance companies train their employees in hydraulics, aeration, water movement and the workings of all the equipment found in the system. An underground Pump Vault will consist of electrical panels, pumps, fans and lighting systems. Equipment malfunctions can be incredibly costly. A licensed professional with confined space training certifications are qualified to regularly check that the wiring and equipment in the Pump Vault is functioning safely and efficiently.

Again, if you know the root cause of the problem, workable solutions fall into place. For example, if a motor in the pump vault is running hot, the reason can be determined and the customer informed of the corrective action before more drastic—and expensive—measures become necessary. The issue may be resolved with the replacement of \$400 component. However, if left to itself, the pump may become so damaged that it needs to be replaced—a potential \$7000 cost or more to the customer. It's all a matter of timing, and a proactive professional has excellent timing.

The water management professional also has a large arsenal of tools to keep your watery paradise looking like, well, a paradise. Here are a few of them:

Filters

These remove suspended particles, enhancing clarity but also discouraging plant growth. Obviously, they only work when the pump is running! Even in today's frugal, economic climate, 12 hours a day should be the minimum. Remember, filters must be changed regularly.



Aerators

These can include fountains, and should be strong enough and strategically placed to ensure full effectiveness.

Defoamers

Nothing spoils the aesthetics of a water feature like unsightly foam, which typically is caused by soap and/or dead organic matter. A good defoamer does the trick, but its effectiveness is reduced if you don't manage the source of the cause.

Flocculent/clarifiers

These agents work like magnets, latching onto floating contaminants such as silt, algae, dust and dead organic matter. The aggregated particles eventually become so heavy that they fall to the bottom.

pH balancers

These work alongside other additives to ensure their effectiveness in slowing down biological contamination.

Enzymes

Let's say you've addressed the issues of aeration and

filtration, yet you still have an algae problem. You need to apply a chemical solution. The right enzymes, carefully chosen and monitored, can help tremendously in this process.

Dyes

Imagine you have a TV crew coming to film your golf tournament tomorrow—and the once-beautiful pond is a scummy brown! Before screaming at the groundskeeper, rush to the store and purchase a dye to perk the water up for the cameras. You may not know it, but the dye will inadvertently benefit the water's health, because the coloring will limit the amount of sunlight reaching below the surface, discouraging unwanted plant growth.

IN CONCLUSION

What's cheap now is expensive later. That's why it is essential to know as much as possible about your lake maintenance company beforehand. How long have they been in business? Are they properly licensed to apply pesticides to your water? Do they know the laws for dumping water down the street drain?

These are just a few of the questions they need to answer, because if they make a mistake, you will be liable for the damage. Not to mention the stress and regret. Any maintenance company can fix problems; what you need and want is a company that can prevent them.

5 QUICK QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CONTRACTOR

1. Do you make the products that you use? Are the products branded and certified?
2. What is the difference in aerators, fountains and bio filters?
3. Liability: Do your employees know how to swim, wear the proper safety gear or will they drown on my property?
4. If I want the natural approach, will it cost more and why? Explain to me what natural means!
5. Is it important to do preventive care and will that extra cost save me money in the future?



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A Golf Course Superintendent's Most Valuable Resource: The Human Resource

by Linda Parker

A golf course superintendent with quality tools, up-to-date equipment, ample chemicals, a fabulous golf facility, and a generous budget may appear to have everything. But missing from the equation would be the most critical component a superintendent needs for success, a well-trained and reliable crew. Human resources are a golf course superintendent's most valuable asset. They are also the resource many superintendents find challenging to attract and retain.

The Great Resignation Is Becoming the Great Reshuffle

Last year was labeled the year of the Great Resignation when nearly 5 million people left their jobs voluntarily. For 2022, however, the label seems to be shifting from "resignation" to "reshuffle." Depending on the data source, the number of currently or previously employed workers seeking a new job is between 45 and 70 percent of the workforce.

"The cost of hiring and onboarding new employees is pricy for organizations and distracting to the managers who deal with the frontlines of the process."



The cost of hiring and onboarding new employees is pricy for organizations and distracting to the managers who deal with the frontlines of the process. According to Deferred Compensation News, the cost of replacing an existing employee ranges from 25 to a staggering 200 percent of the job's annual salary because of "lost productivity, hiring a replacement and training the new employee. In addition, there are the intangible costs of impact on the work environment and employee morale."

An Unexpected Twist for Golf Course Superintendents

Surprisingly, the Great Resignation/ the Great Reshuffle may benefit the golf course maintenance industry. The

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) looks at an interesting aspect of pandemic-related job departures and cites research from Goldman Sachs that stated, "Nearly 70 percent of the 5 million people who have left the labor force during the pandemic are older than 55."

While some older workers left their jobs because of concerns for their health and wellbeing, job burnout motivated many workers to join the mass exodus. These workers were not tired of working. Instead, they were tired of working indoors, working behind a desk, working long hours and working for demanding supervisors.

Now, after months away from the grind, many of these workers

would enjoy “doing something,” especially if that new role involved being outdoors, getting exercise, perhaps working only a few days each week and above all else, not shouldering management-level pressure and responsibilities.

As employees, these workers are well-versed in workplace protocols. They may not understand the mowing and grassing schedules yet. But they already understand the routines of being on time, working as a team and being personally accountable for their actions.

The Turf is Not Always Greener

Career burnout isn’t limited to older employees. Even workers with only a few years of employment under their belt have tossed in the towel and walked away from stressful jobs. The Fidelity Investments 2022 Financial Resolutions Study showed that 47% of currently employed younger workers plan to seek a new position in 2022, citing stress levels and the need for greater flexibility as top motivators.

Edit Your Narrative

Can golf course superintendents looking for workers connect with the newly expanded demographic of unemployed 55 and older workers? Can they connect with restless younger workers looking for a change? YES! But, to do so, superintendents cannot write the same meat and potatoes job descriptions they have relied on in the past or post these job descriptions solely on the same outlets they have used before.

Appealing to workers who have never worked in the golf industry calls for posting job descriptions that creatively emphasize aspects of the job the superintendent may take for granted or assume are only incidental.

- Consider inviting workers to “unretire” at the golf course.
- Rather than writing about the job requirements, describe the rewards for the prospective employee. Emphasize flexibility of hours and scheduling and the opportunity to work outdoors in a safe and pleasant environment.
- Point out benefits, such as discounted rounds of golf, pro shop, golf range and lesson discounts or easy tee time booking.

“Even workers with only a few years of employment under their belt have tossed in the towel and walked away from stressful jobs.”

- Work with your course’s HR Director, Director of Golf or other leadership to explore medical, dental or optical insurance or similar benefits for part-time employees. Workers in their 50s have years to go before qualifying for Medicare and may value healthcare benefits far more than the associated salary.
- For workers looking for a career change, emphasize on-the-job training, advancement opportunities or educational reimbursements if your facility offers these programs.
- Consider what may have driven workers away from their previous jobs and communicate that they won’t face the same stressful issues if they join your team.

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- Framing a job opening as “an opportunity to skip your workout at the gym, get in shape, work outdoors as part of a supportive team in a serene and beautiful setting AND play golf at a discounted price” could help you attract reliable workers.

Advertising on job boards may not be the optimal way for golf course superintendents to connect with an expanded marketplace of prospects, including non-traditional candidates who aren't proactively searching for work or don't know they are interested until they see your engaging job description. Getting the word out at the golf course and through local churches, restaurants, hair salons and other atypical communication paths could help superintendents cast a wide net for successfully hiring new employees.

Connect With All Course Employees

Before a global pandemic redefined almost everything, most golf courses siloed their work teams. Maintenance crews

didn't work in the clubhouse. Pro shop workers didn't bus tables in the restaurant, and the bartender at the 19th hole never mowed the greens. Work teams did not share ideas, and they certainly did not cross-train to learn each other's job responsibilities.

At some courses, especially in the early months of the pandemic, payroll budgets shrank and select functions of the golf course either were curtailed or shut down. Facilities across the country creatively maintained the courses and kept workers employed by working with the team that was available in the moment.

Cross-training work teams creates a cohesive work environment. New insights are gained, mutual respect increases and an employee base can develop a greater sense of camaraderie and unity simply by talking together in a moderated setting about their roles, objectives and challenges. Coming together as a group encourages workers in one area to share their observations and ideas with workers in other areas.

“Appealing to workers who have never worked in the golf industry calls for posting job descriptions that creatively emphasize aspects of the job the superintendent may take for granted or assume are only incidental.”

Idea sharing can set the stage for job sharing. Cross-training employees of the course to work in multiple areas expands a facility's coverage during special events or periods of high demand. This strategy can provide full-time hours by combining part-time roles. It can reduce the physical demands of daily maintenance work by balancing it with hours in a less physically taxing role. Sharing job roles across departments can break up the routine for workers seeking more variety in their responsibilities. When employed strategically, sharing job roles can go a long way to reducing a superintendent's labor shortage.

The Flux Won't Continue Forever

Economists are already predicting that the wide-open job market will soon be narrowing because people have no choice but to choose a job and resume working. Golf course superintendents who act now, marketing job openings creatively and without a preconceived idea of their ideal candidate, may still be able to capitalize on job market motility and, as a result, build a robust and unique maintenance team.

Read What Will the Golf Course Industry Look Like in 2022 for further perspective on changes in golf maintenance industry.



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Linda Parker has been writing professionally since the 1980s. With clients in finance, sports, technology, 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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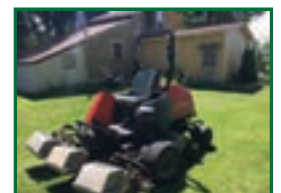
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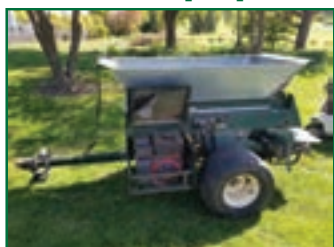


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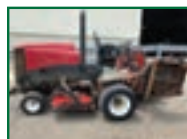
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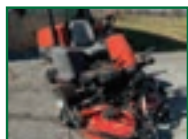
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Interview with Incoming GCSAA President Kevin Breen

by Jay Flemma

Each year it is our privilege to bring you the thoughts and goals of the incoming president of the Golf Course Superintendents. It gives you, dear reader, a chance right out of the gate, to jump on board all the latest projects while also getting a recap of the last year's successes, challenges, and changes.

Last month Kevin Breen was elected the new president of the GCSAA to serve the traditional one year term. Breen served as vice president of the association in 2021 and has been a member of the association's board of directors since 2015. The new president hails from California's La Rinconada Country Club, where he has been Head Superintendent since 2011. Previously, he served as Director of Maintenance at Lahontan Golf Club in Truckee, California and as the superintendent at Los Alamos (New Mexico) Golf Course. A 31-year member of GCSAA, Breen is also a past president of both the Sierra Nevada GCSA and the California GCSA.



GCT: Is dealing with Coronavirus still the number one priority for GCSAA or have the procedures and initiatives you implemented last year worked so well across the country that you can turn to other projects?

KB: Coronavirus has obviously disrupted our lives and what we consider "normal." In broadest terms, it changed our lives, and it also changed the golf industry, but it also provides opportunities to advance our game and our industry.

The most important lesson that we've learned from Coronavirus is that although social media provides a great way to connect, it will not replace the human desire that we have to get together face to face.

GCT: You're obviously referring to the great gains golf made in the number of people taking up the game, sticking with it, and the commensurate increase in rounds played. We had a great year in 2020? For both golf and the GCSAA was 2021 just as strong?

KB: Yes, we've continued to see record rounds of golf played and good revenue for facilities.

GCT: Some other things that came out of the pandemic were the various rules regarding carts and social distancing and the like. What rules have been rolled back?

KB: Overall, it's been a difficult few years for superintendents with new rules and the amount of

play, the pressure that put on our courses, and keeping everyone in the workplace safe and healthy. Now we have supply chain issues, and I think the supers have handled it admirably, and we are all looking forward to moving on.

As we do, there are a number of positive outcomes. First and foremost is a reemphasis how important golf is to the club. You might not have had food and beverage but you could still play, and most facilities were still profitable.

GCT: And when it comes to public golf courses how important they were to their communities.

KB: Yes, a place for people to gather that didn't exist anywhere else.

GCT: Golf was indeed at the vanguard of the comeback, both at the grass roots and with their advocacy efforts to keep course open during the pandemic's height. Do you have a number on what percentage of facilities were profitable during the 2020 and 2021 seasons, both private and public?

KB: National Golf Foundation keeps the exact numbers, but when I travel around to clubs and talk to people they tell me they have wait lists and are doing well. And at public courses the tee sheets are full. And yes, GCSAA advocacy – our own and in concert with others – was particularly effective, even instrumental in keeping golf open. Right as it became apparent there was going to be a shut down, GCSAA advocates contacted state governors to clarify and ensure that emergency health orders allowed our supers to access their facilities to continue to perform basic maintenance operations. And we – in conjunction with our allied partners – developed a Back2Golf Guide that contained in one place all the safety guidelines. After that we conducted a letter writing campaign to governors and state health officials educating them on the unique nature of golf courses that have Covid protections backed right in, naturally keeping the players and guests safe.

GCT: So what new projects or initiatives are you starting and what old ones are you continuing?

KB: One of the biggest changes coming is the re-evaluation of the conference and trade show so that it meets the needs of both attendees and vendors.

GCT: Last year it was a mix of both live and in-person participation?

KB: Yes, and going forward how we learn, communicate, and congregate has changed because of the pandemic. So going forward we are looking at how to evolve the conference and trade show to meet these new paradigms.


GCT: Tell us about how some of the older projects are advancing. I remember best practice management was at the top of the priority list. You had wanted all 50 states to have bmps by 2020 and accomplished that goal. The next step was to have all of your courses and maintenance facilities adopt the state bmps within the next 2-3 years. How is that coming?

KB: Last year we got the states done, and going forward now we want individual facility adaptation. That's one of the top goals for the coming year. It has started well; facility adaptation is gathering momentum as superintendents find the state bmps easy to adopt.

GCT: Have you got an update on the First Green Program?
[Author's Note: That's the one that brings middle school kids to the golf course to study STEM curriculum in the arena of golf course maintenance, with an eye on getting them interested in careers in the industry.]

KB: We got off to a great start, but then the pandemic hit and we couldn't bring the school kids in for a time. But now we are ready to start again, and I expect it will be a great success. It brings student, parents, and teachers together and hopefully kindles in them not only a love of the game but of the science behind the game. Perhaps some students may become industry professionals and find a career.

GCT: How did you get started in golf and studying turfgrass sciences?



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KB: I was introduced to golf at a very young age by my father who was an avid golfer; I had my first golf clubs before I could walk. I didn't enjoy playing a lot until I got into the industry which I happened upon more or less by accident.

GCT: Tell us about the happy accident.

KB: I have a degree in meteorology from the University of Nebraska (circa 1986). After college, I went to Colorado with my girlfriend at the time. I thought I'd go into meteorology but I ended up at a ski area.

GCT: Which one?

KB: Keystone. I enjoyed working for the resort and skiing in winter, but in the summer time I needed a job so I went to Keystone Ranch Golf Course and applied for a maintenance position on the

crew, and the rest, as they say, is history. I went on to Colorado State for their turf grass program and obtained a second degree in horticulture.

When not reporting live from major sports championships or researching golf courses for design, value, and excitement, multiple award-winning sportswriter 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

Paul Latshaw of Merion Makes 5 Predictions About the Future of the Golf Industry

by Henrik Rosendahl

Paul Latshaw speaks with Spiio about how technology has already changed the work on golf courses, and what he sees coming in the future: What factors will have the biggest impact on golf grounds management? What role will technology play? What role will the state and federal government(s) play? Let's take a look into the crystal ball with a man who knows the industry as well as anyone and see what the future could hold.

Experience and Excellence: Paul Latshaw and the Golf Course Industry

Paul B. Latshaw MSM CGCS is Director of Golf Course Operations at Merion Golf Club. People in the industry recognize him as one of the most influential names in turf management. Skimming his CV feels like reading through a list of the top 100 golf courses. He started his career as a greenskeeper at Oakmont Country Club before he worked as an assistant superintendent at Wilmington Country Club. Then



he took over as superintendent at Merion Golf Club. He moved on to Oak Hill Country Club, then Muirfield Village Golf Club, and he is now back at Merion Golf Club. Throughout the years he probably collected more experience on professional tournaments than many active pro-players. He is an active member of professional associations like the GCSAA, the Central Ohio GSCA, the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, The Penn State Alumni Association, and the Toro Turfgrass Scholarship Panel.

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four miles north of Havertown, Pennsylvania. Merion's East Course, a favorite of most golfers, is a traditional golf club where history has been made time and time again. It has hosted 18 USGA championships, more than any other club in the world. The course proudly continues its championship legacy, projected to host the 2022 Curtis Cup, 2026 U.S. Amateur, 2034 and 2046 U.S. Women's Opens, and the 2030 and 2050 U.S. Opens.

Golf Course Management today: Providing the perfect playing conditions

When Paul B. Latshaw speaks about his work at the Merion Golf Club, you start to understand that there is a real craftsmanship and art behind golf course

management: "Everything we do is geared toward the playing conditions and providing the best surfaces possible. The goal at Merion is to provide fast and firm playing surfaces on a regular basis. People come from all over the world to play Merion and you always want to provide a memorable experience with outstanding playing surfaces. We are in essence in the service industry." All his experience at top-notch golf courses has refined Latshaw's insight into industry trends.

"Providing outstanding playing conditions" – this has been the goal of golf course superintendents from the very start and it will remain so in the future. But many things in the industry are changing."

The Personnel Challenge: Maximizing Efficiency of Good Staff

One common concern among superintendents is that it is getting harder and harder to find affordable, qualified personnel. This trend has only been exacerbated over the last few years. At the same time, there have been incredible developments in technology for machinery and equipment. Paul Latshaw maintains that a course is only as good as its staff, and so a GCS is always looking to hire and keep great people. However, he argues, the development of autonomous machinery could help to reduce the pressure associated with finding adequate staff, especially during peak season, amid a difficult labor market.

“There will be more autonomous machinery on the courses that will lead to more efficiency. This trend will continue to grow. It is

hard to find good staff, especially during the peak seasons, and the wages are increasing. These factors will support this trend.”

Although he thinks that there are many tasks that are better performed by human beings, Latshaw is optimistic that the technology push in autonomous machinery will lead to an increase in overall efficiency. “There are many ways personnel can be used that are better than cutting fairways or zig-zagging the fairway with a moisture meter if [a superintendent] can get this job done by technology.” he comments. “Instead, his staff can help better where it is needed most: For example, in complex decision making.” An irrigation decision is based on a variety of influence factors. There are weather predictions and organizational factors that have to be taken into account in addition to current moisture levels. Of course, data can help here.

The Data Opportunity: Efficient Operations Planning and Decision-making

Water management is one of the most important elements in golf course management. Many people think that rain is good for a golf course. But uncontrollable moisture due to rain can lead to disease pressure and soft playing conditions. Therefore, it is very important for superintendents to stay in control of their moisture levels.

The use of data has dramatically increased within the last decade,



PAUL LATSHAW, DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS AT MERION GOLF CLUB

delivering valuable information to make informed decisions. This trend will only continue. Latshaw offers as an example that data could help him to detect defective sprinkler heads. If data indicates outliers in moisture levels on comparable golf course



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areas with similar soil types, it might indicate a problem in the irrigation system, like a blocked sprinkler head. Then he can send someone out to that specific location to check the irrigation system.

“Let us take irrigation decisions as an example. They are the biggest part of the whole job. These are very complex decisions. We are having long discussions about it. The more data points I have to make irrigation decisions, the better I can make these decisions with confidence.”

In-ground data systems deliver the ability to constantly track the course. This means that instead of running around all day taking moisture level measurements, staff can be sent to identified problematic spots to work on solutions. The same is true for hard irrigation decisions. Data adds more insights to these complex decisions. In the future, there might be more advanced systems that not only report data, but actually provide recommendations for irrigation decisions.

Paul Latshaw points out: “Irrigation amounts are based on science, but there is a true art to water management along with intuition!”. Even though he would rather make the final call himself than leave it up to a system, he says that he would use these recommendations as additional data points to inform his irrigation decisions.

The Environmental Challenge: Regulations on the Use of Water and Chemicals

But another obvious trend that is starting to shake the industry is regulation. Water regulations and restrictions have been or are being adopted in many states. As we are seeing declining water levels in our rivers and lakes, it is only a matter of time



before every superintendent and irrigator starts factoring the availability and price of water into their irrigation equation. Some parts of the country might for now be more affected than others, but the overall trend is clear.

The list of countermeasures is long: Sustainable irrigation management includes smart golf course design, the use of alternative water sources, low-consuming grass types, seasonal irrigation management, and renewed irrigation technologies. One cost-effective way to conserve water is the use of technology, like data from drones and in-ground data. The European Golf Association (EGA) states that precise knowledge about moisture levels and appropriately adjusted irrigation can lead to a 15-20% reduction in water consumption. (<https://www.ega-golf.ch/best-practice/water-use-and-golf-courses-irrigation-optimization>).

“Water is already the biggest cost factor for many golf courses, and there is no sign that this situation will relax. Considering this, the benefits of water-saving

technology easily outweigh the costs.

“Water is already the biggest cost factor for many golf courses, and there is no sign that this situation will relax. Considering this, the benefits of water-saving technology easily outweigh the costs.”

“In the future, the industry will have to deal more and more with regulations and restrictions. We can already feel it for water. Other countries are reducing chemical inputs; this could also become a topic in the US.”

Latshaw foresees that irrigation decisions will not only have to consider costs. Restrictions might force golf clubs to decide between using the majority of an annual water ration in high season, shooting for that nice green color all over the course, and prolonging the season as much as possible. Management decisions will include at what point during the season you want to have a perfect green and at what point you have to keep the fairways a bit dryer and browner.

Latshaw also assumes that restrictions and regulations that we now see in the use of water could extend to another field of golf course management: the use of chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers. Further research has to be done to determine if such regulative actions actually have positive effects, but as other countries are adopting them, golf courses in the U.S. may need to be prepared for the possibility of chemical regulation as well. . In such a future, superintendents would have to be very informed in order to maximize their use of a specific limited contingent.

Technology Shifts: Evaluating the Potential of the Unknown

However, Latshaw points to one factor where he would not dare to attempt precise predictions. This factor is the field of technology. Latshaw confesses that the technological developments in the last ten years have surprised him. "Look at pump systems," he says. "Back in the day, you had to go down to a pump station to check on the performance and adjust the pump system. Today, everything can be checked and adjusted on an irrigation system app. You have full control using your phone."

"There has been an incredible technology push over the past ten years. It is very hard to predict what will happen in the next few years, but I am certain that it will have a big impact on our daily operations."

The adoption of such rapidly-developing technology is very hard to predict. Our collective data and understanding is growing. Assistant superintendents that have recently finished their education and started into their careers are increasingly data-driven. Integrations and automations are possible in many areas.

Moisture and temperature data can be combined with irrigation systems, course management systems like Playbooks and Greenkeeper, or in-ground heating and cooling systems that are able to manage moisture levels in greens. Salinity and temperature data can potentially inform autonomous pesticide application machinery (though, again, Latshaw stresses that there will always be a necessary human aspect to chemical application). In that way the individual strengths of various systems can be combined to maximize the outcome for operations management.

Paul Latshaw likes technology that is simple and easy to use. As we move forward, it will become even more critical for golf course management to stay informed and open to new technology, evaluating costs and benefits. Ultimately, superintendents may need to rely on an intuitive gut feeling as they navigate which technologies can best help them in their daily operations.

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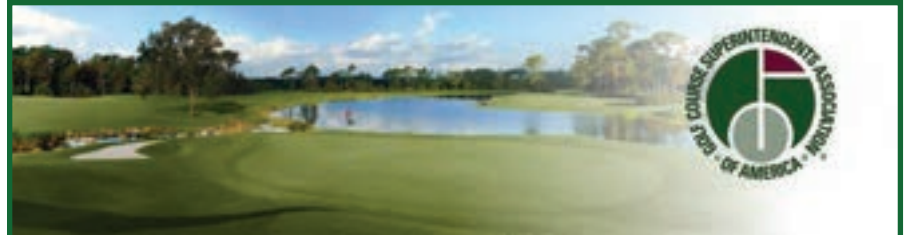
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Interview with The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort and Golf Club in Puerto Rico

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RAIN FOREST FROM THE GOLF COURSE
AT THE ST. REGIS BAHIA BEACH RESORT.

This is the first installment of a monthly feature that Golf Course Trades has started with Audubon International, the non-profit organization whose mission is to create environmentally sustainable environments where people live, work, and play. Each month GCT will speak with a superintendent or agronomy manager at an Audubon International-certified property.

This month we hear from two managers at The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort and Golf Club in Puerto Rico – William Ocasio, Golf Course Superintendent, and Marcela Canon, MSc, Executive Director of the Alma de Bahia Foundation (a non-profit organization created by the resort to work on environmental projects at the property and regionally).

1. Why did Bahia Beach join the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Golf?

Marcela Canon: Bahia Beach is one of the most gorgeous places in the world. From the lush forests to the turquoise oceans to the abundance of lively wildlife, few places compare to the scenery and sounds that

you will find at Bahia Beach. In fact, 65% of the Bahia Beach property comprises unharmed wildlife sanctuaries and incredible nature trails, earning us the distinction of being a Certified Gold Audubon International Signature Sanctuary.

2. How did BB manage to achieve this status – what did the process entail?

Marcela Canon: Initial Assessment – A member of the Audubon International staff visited our property to determine what natural resources we had and how a typical construction process could damage them.

Natural Resource Management Plan – Next, Audubon International put together a

Natural Resource Management Program (NRMP) to let us know how to build our resort so that there would be a minimal impact on the environment and the wildlife that depends on it to live.

Execution - We had several site visits during and after the construction phase to confirm we were following the guidelines set out in the NRMP.

Random Audits - Audubon International continues to visit us to perform audits, ensuring we are still doing our part to protect our planet.

Recertification – Achieving Certified Gold Audubon International Signature Sanctuary status is not a onetime thing—we must recertify

every few years to keep the distinction.

3. What were / are the most challenging aspects of being certified and maintaining the standards required to achieve and retain that status?

Marcela Canon: We are truly committed with our program, and everything that we do has become a lifestyle and part of our efforts to keep our status. We have to be consistent with what we do, and that can sometimes be challenging, but we have always maintained our certifications. We also find new ways to include new residents and new staff to take part and understand our commitment to the preservation of our surroundings. Our most



Marcela Canon

significant efforts are to make all the processes part of the typical day-to-day work, include all different departments, members, hotel guests, and staff committed and interested in our important certifications.

4. What has been different for your maintenance department before and after becoming Gold Certified?

William Ocasio: We have been grateful to have received the certification from the beginning, but the care and consideration for natural resources and wildlife habitats becomes part of the organizational culture. As time passes, we take part in different initiatives that help preserve our environment and nature. It is a life-changing experience.

5. What are the biggest benefits of certification/membership?

Marcela Canon: One of the biggest benefits is the credibility

with respect to environmental commitment and the tools to train staff. Becoming a Certified Gold Audubon International Signature Sanctuary is more than just a label. It demonstrates our extreme passion for the world. We continuously partner with private and public organizations to ensure that the local endangered species will be around for our kids to enjoy—because the world would be a little less beautiful without the Leatherback Turtle or Caribbean Manatee, two of the species we are committed to.

Our Alma de Bahia Foundation, which translates to the Soul of Bahia, contributes to the community and local sustainability through conservation initiatives and environmental education. The Foundation is tasked with the protection and enrichment of

critical habitats for the flora and fauna inside the resort and its surrounding areas. The Foundation also works closely with public and private organizations to protect the environment and educate the public.

The Foundation works closely with the residents and guests at Bahia to give back to our community and the natural environment.

6. Describe how you view the cost of membership/certification vs. the ROI (however that's measured by St. Regis and BBGC).

Marcela Canon: The certification is considered a prominent recognition providing added value to Bahia's property and The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort as the first and only resort in the Caribbean to be awarded the Gold Signature Sanctuary

certification by Audubon International.

7. What is the best guidance or tip(s) you have received pertaining to being a superintendent and overseeing golf course agronomy/maintenance department? (And from whom?)

William Ocasio: To be very disciplined and always act with caution. Carelessness will lead to mistakes that are detrimental to the golf course. I learned this from Mike Mehan and Hector Ortiz, two Directors of Agronomy who I worked with at Dorado Beach.



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Golf Course Review: Pioneer Pointe

by Paul Seifert

The Madison area's newest golf course, Pioneer Pointe is a par three lover's dream.

Designed by Lohmann Quitno and debuted for preview play in the Fall of 2021, the course features 13 terrific par threes, ranging from 95 yards on the "Short" eighth to 275 on the long, uphill eleventh.

This is anything but an ordinary pitch and putt, stretching out club selection to a full bag and featuring a diverse layout of fun and challenging golf holes that hail from modern times back to the game's Golden Age.

Developed by Jeff and Kyle Haen of Haen Real Estate, the course is a sister property to Hawk's Landing Golf Club in Verona, which is a short five- to ten-minute drive away.

Jeff and Kyle, along with Membership Director Brooke Ferrell-Parisi, met up with my friend, Will and me on a bitterly cold, high-30's early morning at Pioneer Pointe this past October to discuss the course's design and development.



Previously home to an 18-hole track named Tumbledown Trails, the site's redevelopment could not support a fully redesigned 18-hole championship course along with the planned subdivision and its drainage needs, so the decision was made – with consultation from Lohmann Quitno – to embrace one of the game's most significant current trends as a non-championship golf experience.

"It's always interesting how ideas come together. The initial influence to go with a par 3 concept at Pioneer Pointe was really more based on site constraints (after housing and drainage needs), which pushed us to think differently.

But then the idea of a 12 (or 13) hole par 3 course took on a life of its own rather quickly as we realized that this was a product the Madison market didn't really have, and, by having a smaller footprint (only 30+/- acres to maintain), it would use less resources. Both are considerable wins." – Todd Quitno, VP & Senior Architect at Lohmann Quitno

As a non-traditional course, Pioneer Pointe could institute world-class green architecture and avoid many of the demands of a championship course setup, like having to keep a perfectly uniform flow or adhering to a particular par or cadence within its hole configuration, or even in finding ways to fit long holes into areas that don't support them.

Non-traditional courses also require less resources to maintain and time for players to play (one of the biggest reasons golf enthusiasts don't play more these days), and will typically cost less than their 18-hole championship counterparts.

These savings in time and financial requirements can open the tee sheet to a larger customer base and welcomes players with varying levels of golf skill and experience.

This is one of the key places golf is heading: More quicker-hitting golf experiences that are accessible to all interested in the game of golf, regardless of their playing ability.

As I've written about extensively in recent years, I love that.

Brooke, a former UW Badger who holds the team's all-time single-season scoring record of 72.3 and career scoring average record at 74.0, was a two-time All Big Ten player (plus two-time second-team selection) during her career at Madison. She was on her way to the LPGA when chronic wrist injuries put an indefinite hold on her Tour dreams. While she accompanied Will and me for our 13-hole round, she's still unable to swing a club and it wasn't hard to see how much that pained her.

Like Will and me, Brooke is a die-hard golf enthusiast, and working for a club like Hawk's Landing with so many other avid golfers is obviously invigorating for her. Despite not being able to show us how it's supposed to be done that day, her passion for the game and property came through in spades, and we couldn't have enjoyed her company and our conversations more.

Hawk's is well-known to have some of the state and area's best conditions, headlined of course by flawless, fast green complexes that always roll perfectly. Superintendent Neil Radatz is one of the best in the business, and now shares his time between Hawk's and Pioneer Pointe. His daft touch with course maintenance has this place growing in beautifully – much better than I could have ever expected on turf less than a year old!

One thing you'll notice quickly about Pioneer Pointe is that the short grass is almost everywhere. There are no tee boxes to promote match play (perfect for a "short" course, in my opinion), so the low-mowed Kentucky bluegrass is all teeable and individual hole setups can change dramatically from group to group and round to round.

The course

"Knowing the greens would be the focus at Pioneer Pointe,

we drew on some Template architecture for inspiration, and that was fun to do and new for me. As we were building things, Neil [Radatz] kept saying "This is my favorite hole," and the next time out it would be "No, this is my favorite hole."

I think that is a testament to the quality of the 13 holes we put together and to the dedication everyone had to making something different. Every hole at Pioneer Pointe has its own personality, and the routing of the golf in and around all the built wetlands and through the rural Wisconsin setting will definitely keep golfers engaged." – Todd Quitno, VP & Senior Architect at Lohmann Quitno

Circling through its new, same-named housing development, Pioneer Pointe's routing does a good job of using the land it's on without feeling too engulfed by neighborhood.

You can obviously see there are beautiful homes around, but it's got its own sense of space, too.

I think and hope the photos from my morning round portray that well as I think Lohmann Quitno did a great job keeping the course from feeling too residential.

The course opens outside the future clubhouse and pro shop, which is targeted for completion this July.

Let me just say, by the way, that if you're picturing a little mobile home with a few shirts and hats to buy in it that you're way off! This may potentially be the nicest "par 3 course clubhouse" in the country by the time it's done.

Hole #1

Pioneer Pointe's first hole, "Washboard," features one of the smallest greens on the course with a single pot bunker that distracts players' attention from everything else happening on this green – there are five



PIONEER POINTE'S FIRST HOLE, "WASHBOARD"

distinct zones on this putting surface!

Hole #2

With a tee shot over water, the second green is a double plateau with raised mounds on each side.

Hit the right distance and chances are you'll have a long, well uphill putt with a ton of break; there's not much easy about this hole.

Hole #3

With a reverse redan green complex, the third is played

slightly downhill and over a wetlands area. Use the front-left side of the green here to run shots on from left to right.

Hole #4

The star of the show on four is one hundred percent the central bunker in this green. How could it be anything different?

Just take a look at the hole location set prior to our morning's round... While it was in a much more benign spot when we actually played, I would LOVE the challenge of finding a way to par this hole



PIONEER POINTE SECOND GREEN



A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF THE 3RD GREEN COMPLEX



PIONEER POINTE #4



PIONEER POINTE #5

with the pin set just several feet from the back end of the trap.

Hole #5

Nicknamed “Boomerang,” the fifth has a long front-to-back, and narrow left-to-right green complex that makes hitting the right section of it vital.

This is the kind of hole that’s really fun to have players’ choice for the teeing area. By offsetting the angle you can work to make the shot fit your eye better than aiming straight-on.

Hole #6

Their version of the Lion’s Mouth template, the sixth is a short par three uphill to a green that’s on a severe front-to-back uphill slope.

The monstrous Lion’s Mouth bunker is situated in front, well below the putting surface, while the back of the green is canted well uphill – in effect creating a bank that can be used to reflect tee shots onward.

This may be a tiny golf hole, but there’s a lot going on!

Hole #7

Ahhhh, the seventh... This was the hole at Pioneer Pointe I was most excited to see, and it did not disappoint! A magnificent biarrizt green, the seventh can stretch to over 200 yards when the pin is past the middle swale that bisects the front and back portions.

Hole #8

The course’s Short hole, the eighth plays just 95 yards uphill to a very wavy green complex. While hitting the green with a lofted wedge should present no issues for most players, it’s unlikely to be an easy birdie hole considering all the different reads they’ll need to make through and around the green’s “thumb print hollow.”

Hole #9

Modeled after the short, downhill seventh at Pebble Beach, the ninth at Pioneer Pointe is heavily guarded by bunkers on the left, short and mostly to the right. With a false front and steep slope that leads to the center of the green, it’s another par three that requires good touch from players’ distance control.

Hole #10

Stretching to 225 yards, the long tenth features a punchbowl green that will move most tee shots on or near the putting surface toward the middle.

This hole and the next – the two longest on the course – played dead in to the wind during our round (and in the upper 30’s/ low 40’s). Not an easy 1-2 punch!

Hole #11

The longest hole at Pioneer Pointe, the uphill eleventh is more of a par 4, or at least a 3-1/2!

Tipping out at 275 yards and with an elevated, kidney bean shaped green complex that makes some hole locations almost inaccessible from the fairway (you should have seen my flop shot over the bunker to the tucked pin past the front-left trap!), threes here should take skins every time.

Hole #12

With a 40-foot drop from tee to green, the twelfth at Pioneer Pointe is modeled loosely after the famed 7th on the Links course at Lawsonia. I say loosely because it’s much longer and a considerably more elevated tee shot, though both holes feature massive mounds (hence the “Box Car” or “Buried Elephant” moniker) and left-to-right slopes for running shots on.

The view on twelve is worth the price of admission alone: Beautiful.

Nicknamed “Eden Odds,” the finishing hole at Pioneer Pointe is a mid-range par three with all the earmarks of its inspiration: The Eden 11th at St. Andrews.

While I’ve yet to play overseas, I’ve done plenty of studying (okay, drooling) online and can certainly see its makings here. Eden holes include all or most of the original template’s four distinct hazards, including the “Strath” bunker front-middle, “Hill” bunker front-left / left of the green, an “Eden” swale or river beyond and cockleshell bunker well short of the green to penalize terrible shots.

Hole #13

With its severely sloped back-to-front green, the 13th at Pioneer Pointe features the first three of these hazards and is a wonderful finish to a fantastic, short round of golf.

I love witnessing new courses growing in over time. Whether an extreme, rugged new development like at Sand Valley Golf Resort and its Sand Valley, Mammoth Dunes, Sandbox and now Lido courses, or a significant renovation like at The Club at Lac La Belle, it’s amazing how quickly agronomists who know what they’re doing can foster exemplary golf conditions.

That’s what I’m seeing from Pioneer Pointe. The Haen family and Hawks Landing have an unbelievable grounds crew that makes impeccable golf happen on a regular basis, and that this seedling course was already in not only playable, but phenomenal shape is a strong nod to their team’s experience and expertise.

And that’s what you want for a site like this. Lohmann Quitno designed a fantastic little

golf course with interesting architecture, and when you have greens as big as some of these are you want to make sure they’re fast and firm, requiring players to hone in on proximity and solid putting. It’s like a miniaturized private golf experience in under two hours, and I’m such a big, big fan.

“I think getting over the ‘Norms’ of 9- or 18-hole golf is still somewhat of a battle among the traditional golfing set, but facilities like Pioneer Pointe that are compelling, feel like real golf, and are quick and fun to play make for great experiences. I look forward to seeing this course thrive!”
– Todd Quitno, VP & Senior Architect at Lohmann Quitno

As the long Wisconsin Winter winds down and we all start planning our in-state day trips, make sure to add Pioneer Pointe to your next visit to the Madison area.

Whether as a [very fortunate] guest at Hawk’s Landing or before or after playing one of the area’s fine public or private courses like The Oaks, University Ridge, Bishop’s Bay or many others, Pioneer Pointe is the perfect way to put an exclamation point on a fantastic Madison day trip.

www.pioneerpointegolf.com

Paul Seifert writer & publisher/ photographer/content creator for WiscoGolfAddict.com, and occasional contributor to other [mostly state and regional] golf publications.

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PIONEER POINTE #8

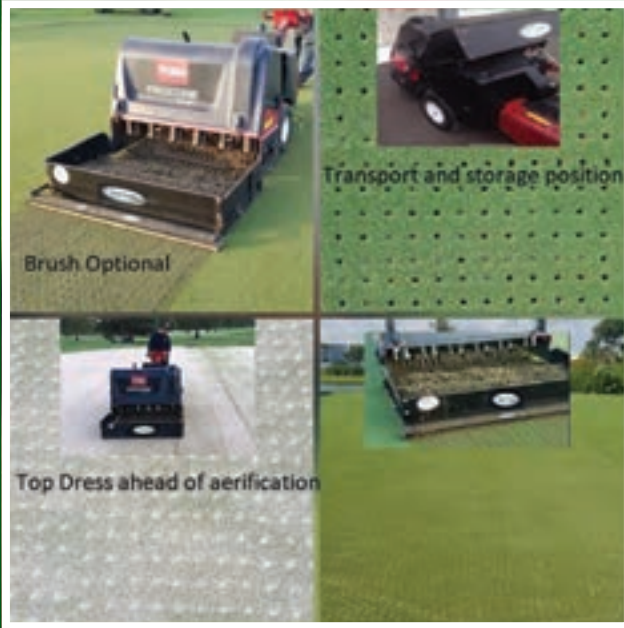


PIONEER POINTE #11



PIONEER POINTE #12

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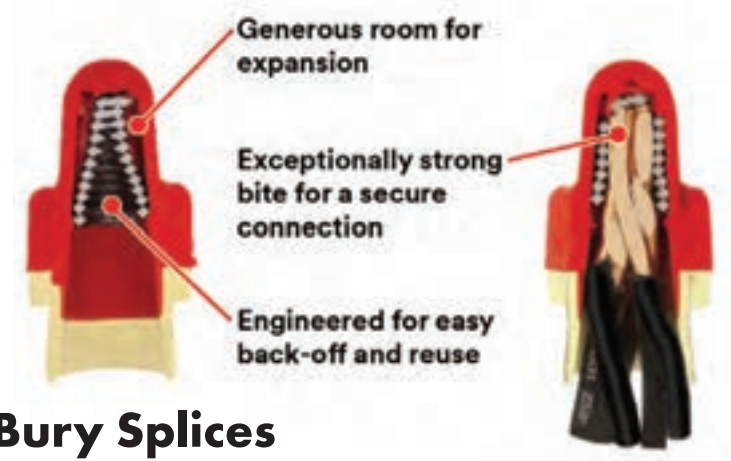
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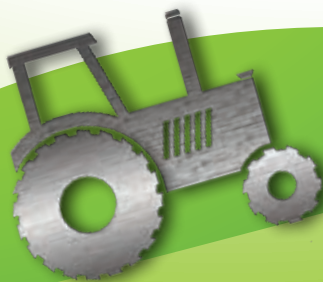
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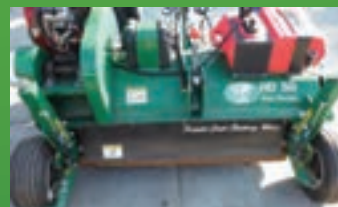
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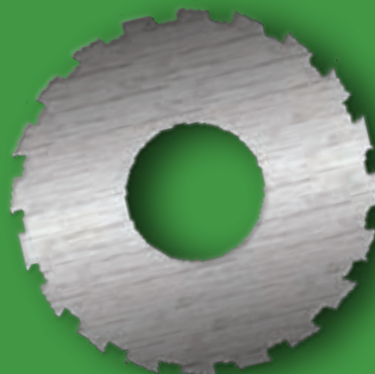


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