

# The GREEN Breeze



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August 2015

Volume 4

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## From the President

We certainly don't need reminded of what a wet 30 day stretch we have had, just look at the turf in low lying or non draining areas and its evident. The last month has been a difficult one weather wise with constant moisture and storms. If everyone feels like me a much needed break was needed and received in Mid-July. With only a months and a half to go of difficult weather we see light at the end of the tunnel.

Our next meeting is the Association Championship at Heritage Club, thanks to Tony Dierkers for hosting us during the difficult month of August. We will crown a champion in the non commercial (Superintendent/ Asst. Superintendent) and commercial category. Please plan on attending this great event!



Dan Walter  
President, GCGCSA

The board has been busy planning an education event on November 10th, please save the date and we want to thank Gregg Schaner and Syngenta for sponsoring the great event! Finally a big thank you to all the Eagle Advertising Sponsors of our association, without the generosity we couldn't be a great organization.

Thanks,  
Dan

## Mark Your Calendar

*The next chapter monthly meeting will be October 5th at Terrace Park Country Club*

## Greater Cincinnati GCSA Happenings

Superintendents Golf Championship

August 3rd at the Heritage Club

11am Registration and lunch

\$50 includes lunch and 18 holes of golf

Heritage Club 6690 Heritage Club Dr, Mason, OH 45040



## Superintendents Golf Championship

### Our host for the Superintendents Golf Championship is Tony Dierkers of the Heritage Club

#### Meet the Staff

Tony Dierkers was born and raised in Cincinnati and graduated from Moeller High School before earning his Bachelor's Degree in Agronomy from the College of Agriculture at The Ohio State University in 1994. From 1993-1999 Tony worked at Muirfield Village Golf Club as an assistant superintendent, preparing the course for events such as The Memorial, The 3 Tour Challenge, and the Solheim Cup. Tony earned the designation of Certified Golf Course Superintendent in 2005 and is a 2 time past president of the Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association. Tony currently serves as a national delegate, vice president of the GCGCSA, and a member of the GCSAA National Education Committee. Tony and his wife Kris (teacher at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton) have a daughter, Emma who is a senior attending Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy.

Sean Potter and Dan Francis are the assistant superintendents at the Heritage Club. Sean is a graduate of the Rutgers Turf Program and has worked at Heritage Tyler. Dan worked at TPC Sawgrass for 2 years, Glenview for 6 years, and California



for his entire golf career. Sean has a son for for 3 years. He has been married to his wife Katie for 6 years and has a 2-yea- old daughter Abigail and the faithful dog Bogey. Tony would also like to mention mechanic, Ryan Wheatley.

#### About Heritage Club

- Heritage Club is a member owned PB Dye designed course that opened in 1996.
- Until 2 years ago irrigation consisted of 100% reclaimed water. Now they dilute with ~25% city water.

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Course/Slope Rating: From the Dye tees  
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Acreage under maintenance: 207

Average size of greens: 4900

Putting green goals: The written Agronomic Policy states that green speeds should be 9.5 - 11, no higher or lower



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## Roots... What Roots?

By *Bob Vavrek, agronomist, Central Region*

*Shallow-rooted turf on putting greens has been a common sight during recent Course Consulting Service visits.*

Along period of time without significant rainfall is called a drought. A one-time deluge of rain is a flood. What do you call weeks upon weeks with no respite from moderate to heavy rainfall? Reverse drought, anti-drought, undrought? In biblical times they called it..."time to build an ark."

Frequent heavy rainfall across the central U.S. has become much more than an inconvenience, it's gotten to the point where only 0.25 inch of rain turns a golf course to mush because the soil is constantly at or near field capacity. Important sources of revenue from outside events and cart fees are practically impossible to recover later in the season once they are lost.

Turf is beginning to suffer as much as the bottom line. Turf roots need oxygen, and a

considerable amount of root die back has been observed in chronically saturated putting greens during recent Course Consulting Service visits. Sand-based greens have fared somewhat better than



soil-based, push-up greens, but all greens are slowly drowning to one degree or another.

The previous update for the Central Region discussed the importance of venting greens to prevent the further loss of roots. Minimally invasive forms of cultivation like venting will continue to be extremely...

(Continued on page 4)

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(continued from page 3) important as summer begins to heat up. In addition, take the extra time to closely monitor the density and depth of the root system and make adjustments to automatic irrigation and hand watering accordingly.

Many courses that use handheld moisture meters to guide irrigation decisions typically measure moisture in the upper 3 inches of the soil profile, where the majority of turfgrass roots typically are found. However, with the amount of root die back that has occurred, measuring the moisture in the

upper 1.5 inch of soil using a shorter set of tines could provide far more useful information.

Shallow-rooted turf is notoriously unforgiving during periods of very hot weather, and only a few hours of moisture stress can spell the difference between live grass and dead grass. No doubt, the table is set for extensive turf loss should Mother Nature decide to add triple-digit temperatures to this season's mixture of quirky weather patterns.

*Credit: United States Golf Association, July 2015*



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# Time to Shine

By Stacie Zinn Roberts



**Equipment managers have long been key cogs in the golf course management machine. Now, they've found an official new home as members of GCSAA.**

It's early morning at Muirfeld Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio, home to Jack Nicklaus and the PGA Tour's Memorial Tournament. As the sun comes up over the maintenance facility, Paul B. Latshaw, CGCS, is doing what he does every morning. He's having a meeting with Bill Claytor, the club's equipment manager. On an average day, the two men may meet up to three times to discuss issues at the course.

At these morning meetings, Latshaw informs Claytor about aerification schedules, tournament prep, when he plans to topdress greens that might require an adjustment to cutting blade height, and other practices that might require adjustments to equipment maintenance and setup. For his part, Claytor keeps Latshaw informed on the status of the equipment, any issues with operator performance, and progress on the equipment manager internship program

that he runs at the shop. It's a collaborative working relationship between professionals, and they've been doing this every workday for more than a decade. "I think we have common goals, a good line of communication and a lot of mutual respect," Latshaw says. At golf courses around the country, equipment managers maintain "hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars' worth of equipment," says John Cunningham, CGCS at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis. "They are responsible for a lot of the assets on the golf course." Latshaw agrees.

"The equipment tech is probably the most important or one of the most important positions on the golf course," the 27-year GCSAA member says. "If the mowers are not set up properly, you're making for unhealthy playing conditions, and it's going to (continued on page 7)

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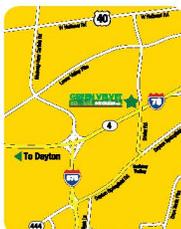
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(continued from page 5) compromise your ability for success. (The job of the equipment manager impacts) productivity, plant health, playing conditions. It's a critical position for any golf course."

### Moving on up

This may not come as a surprise to superintendents, but to club members and other club staff who may have never seen the equipment manager, let alone met him or her, the importance of the role may come as big news. But now, that may be about to change.

In April, the 370 members of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association (IGCEMA), an all-volunteer association founded in 2006, voted to dissolve their organization. This came after GCSAA members voted to create an Equipment Manager

membership classification, welcoming IGCEMA members into the fold. Through the end of 2015, any equipment manager may join GCSAA for free.

When the move was announced in April, Stephen Tucker, former IGCEMA CEO and the equipment manager at Tranquilo Golf Club at Four Seasons in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., issued the following statement: "Our association has continued to grow, and we have reached a point where our growth has out-paced our resources as a volunteer group. This is a good day, and we are excited at the possibilities for equipment technicians around the world now to be part of GCSAA."

"We recognize that equipment managers are an integral part of our membership and a vital part of the successful golf course management team," says John J. O'Keefe, CGCS, GCSAA president. "We hope all facilities will encourage their equipment managers to become a valuable part of the association."

Shari Koehler, director of professional development for GCSAA, says the merger has been in the works for the past two years. The GCSAA vote on the creation of a member classification for equipment managers took place during the

(continued on page 8)

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## Time to Shine



(continued from page 9) 2015 Golf Industry Show in February, and passed by 96 percent. By the end of May, approximately 450 equipment managers had already joined GCSAA under the newly formed classification.

The certificate program initiated by IGCEMA will remain in place with GCSAA, as will the presentation of the Edwin Budding Award, which recognizes technical professionals who have helped shape the turf industry. The award is named for the designer of the first cylinder mower.

### Knowledge is power

To provide a robust continuing education program for EMs, now and for the future, GCSAA is “in the process of defining the EM body of knowledge,” Koehler says.

“It’s our charge to provide relevant and cutting-edge continuing education to the golf course management team,” Koehler says. “In order to identify the full knowledge, skills and abilities of the equipment manager, we are conducting a job task analysis that establishes a foundation of competencies. As a result of this process, education can swiftly be identified and provided to meet the ever-demanding needs of the golf course equipment manager.”

Koehler adds that “not only are the germane skills of the equipment manager important, but equally important to the technical skills is the understanding of the relationship between agronomic practices and maintenance practices.” In other words, there is a correlation between well-maintained equipment and a well-managed golf course.

“They manage the final look and the final cut of the product,” Cunningham says. “The technology of the equipment we use now is not what it was 20 years ago. We’ve got electric mowers, hybrid mowers that require a high level of competency, and that’s what they’re great at. Fifteen years ago, there weren’t many equipment managers. They were called ‘golf course mechanics.’ It’s changed because the industry and the profession have evolved. Now they’re maintaining millions of dollars’ worth of equipment, and they’re managing a big asset.”

### One step beyond

Cunningham and Bellerive’s equipment manager of 12 years, Chris Rapp, served on the task force that helped bring the association merger to

fruition. Rapp himself had served as a board member for IGCEMA as vice president.

“The guys that were running the IGCEMA, they had kind of taken it as far as they could. They had done an excellent job, but you can only take it so far as a group of guys volunteering and holding down a full-time job with no paid (association) staff,” says Rapp, a one-year member of GCSAA. “The GCSAA’s got people there that are passionate about what they do. They’re taking us under their wing, and we’re reaping the benefits of all their knowledge and professionalism, their connections with education and networks. There’s no telling how far they’ll be able to take this. I guess we’ll find out.”

Latshaw says he sees real value in GCSAA membership for equipment managers, especially in their ability to take classes at the Golf Industry Show, as well as to check out equipment and talk with manufacturers on the GIS trade show floor.

“If he were to walk the trade show floor, he’d look at things that I wouldn’t,” Latshaw says of Claytor. “Bed knives, aerification tines, grinding equipment won’t be my focus. I’ll want to see wetting agents (and other turf products). He’ll be more geared on the mechanical side of what will run a shop more efficiently.”

### Safety net

At Tour 18 at Rose Creek Golf Club in Edmund, Okla., Adam Hess views his equipment manager, Gene Stephen, as an experienced, positive force in the shop. The equipment manager, Hess says, “is the unsung hero of a country club.”

Hess grew up in a golf family — as an assistant superintendent, he won the 2010 GCSAA National Championship at PGA West in Palm Springs, and he is the son of Alan Hess, CGCS, a 30-plus-year veteran of Texas golf. He grew up in Houston and interned in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. His posting in Oklahoma was his very first experience with growing grass in the transition zone. Two weeks into that first season, his equipment manager quit. As luck would have it, he heard that an experienced equipment manager some 20 years his senior, Stephen, a former marine, was looking to move from Michigan to Idaho. (continued on page 9)



(continued from page 8) His posting in Oklahoma was his very first experience with growing grass in the transition zone. Two weeks into that first season, his equipment manager quit. As luck would have it, he heard that an experienced equipment manager some 20 years his senior, Stephen, a former marine, was looking to move from Michigan to Oklahoma to be closer to family. Just by coincidence, Stephen was in town and ready to come in for an interview. Hess hired him immediately.

Hess calls himself “lucky to have him as my equipment manager.” That first season, the two men worked together at Rose Creek during one of Oklahoma’s harshest winters, which was followed by one of the state’s hot-test summers. “He helped me keep my cool in my rookie year,” the eight-year GCSAA member says. The extreme weather killed off so much of the bermudagrass on the course that Hess had to replace 25 percent of the fairways and 70 percent of the tee boxes and collars.

“I don’t think I would have been successful that year in the repair and getting things back into shape without Gene,” Hess says. “I don’t think I could have been able to do that and also be an equipment technician at the same time. In April, it’s hard to find (an equipment manager. I was very lucky to get him. While we were out cutting sod and laying sod and getting the golf course back in shape, he held down the fort in the shop. He kept an air of calmness. It could have been a lot worse. He was the key piece that helped propel us to the next level.” **Getting their due**

The next level is indeed the goal of GCSAA in adding the Equipment Manager membership classification to the association.

“I can recall times when I was introduced as a golf course superintendent, and people would think you’re just out there mowing grass. The GCSAA has done a phenomenal job in elevating our profession

and what people now think and feel about what a golf course superintendent does on a golf course. They don’t think I just mow grass. My members know what we do,” says Cunningham, who is an 18-year member of GCSAA. “For the equipment manager, it’s just the same. Someone needs to shine a light on the fact that they’re truly professional in their own right. I think that’s what this process has done.”

Like Hess, Cunningham says the equipment managers “truly are the unsung heroes in golf operations. They’re professionals and, at many operations, it’s truly the one function that many golf course superintendents could not carry out.”

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***“Someone needs to shine a light on the fact that they’re truly professional in their own right. I think that’s what this process has done.”***

**— John Cunningham, CGCS**

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As an equipment manager, Rapp says he’s eager to see the equipment manager position become recognized as a profession, a career. “There’s a lot of young men and women out there that are extremely talented mechanically,” Rapp says, yet they may not even consider a golf course equipment manager position as a job simply because they don’t know about it.

He says he’d be gratified “to have that recognition that people know that this is a cool job and you can be financially successful at it, too. There are equipment managers out there who are making six figures. That’s nothing to sneeze at.”

“As far as elevating the profession,” Rapp says, “my take is that someday, maybe some kids will say, instead of fireman or doctor or lawyer, maybe they’ll say they want to be a golf course equipment manager. Wouldn’t that be cool?”

**Credit: Golf Course Management Magazine, July 2015.**

# 2015 Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association Board Members

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