



The Green Sheet

Central Pennsylvania Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume 26 Issue 7

Founded ~ April 11, 1939

October 2019

October Meeting

Moselem Springs Golf Club

684 Eagle Road
Fleetwood, PA 19522

Host:

Tim O'Neil, Superintendent

Monday, October 21, 2019

Registration - 10:00AM

Speaker - 10:15 AM

Lunch - 11:15 AM

Golf - 12:30 Shotgun

Appetizers/Cash Bar - Following Golf

*There will be a CPGCSA Board of Directors Meeting
at 8:00 AM.*



Superintendent Profile

Tim O'Neil began caddying at Moselem Springs Golf Club in 1973. He then started on the crew working for Byron "Corky" Knoll in 1976. Tim completed his 2 year certification degree at Penn State in 1980. He then returned to Moselem as a full-time employee. A few years later Tim became the Assistant Superintendent and then became the Superintendent in 2004.

Moselem Springs Golf Club Profile

Hawley Quier, former publisher of the Reading Eagle newspaper in Reading, PA, had avocations of golf and fishing. He came from a golfing family. Every member has long been identified with the game in the Eastern Pennsylvania area. Let him relate how the Moselem Springs Golf Club came into being:

"Some years ago on what must have been the hottest day of that summer I sought relief for mind and spirit in the spring-fed pond on what was termed the 'family farm' at Moselem Springs. Moments later, raising my head from the surface of the water, I recall, vividly looking over the terrain and saying to myself, 'What a wonderful natural setting for a golf course!'

"The 'family farm' is now a memory and a golf course has been designed and constructed by George Fazio which has surpassed by far the scope of my 'dream' and also some preliminary plans which were drafted by other capable golf architects."

We of the Moselem Springs Golf Club have another dream - that our friends of today and others who we trust will be our friends of tomorrow may derive pleasure from a golfing enclave of great natural beauty and a course of unusual charm and excellence.

Moselem Springs Golf Club opened in 1964 and was host to the Women's Open Championship of the USGA in 1968 and is proud to be listed as one of the top courses in the nation.



October President's Message



Greetings all,

After reading my September message one of our colleagues eloquently responded to me with "Greenie you are an idiot." I couldn't argue with him after my rant about how this is the greatest time of year and blah blah blah, and now we have gone through one of the hottest and driest September's on record. I believe there is some karma in there somewhere and I apologize for ever saying anything at this point. Although, I will say this weather should be good for most to finish the season on a high note for rounds played and getting some projects done. Unfortunately it's not helping most of our stress levels and allowing much time away from the course. Again I am sorry for ever saying a word. The cool mornings are nice though right?

Anyway, we had a good meeting in September at Huntsville Golf Club. What a golf course! I know I got my butt kicked that day, but what a piece of property. Thank you Jeff Fry, Mark McCormick and the rest of the staff for hosting us and providing such wonderful hospitality. I am sorry more members couldn't figure out how to get away for a day and enjoy the beautiful weather at a first class facility. There is one more opportunity to join us for a meeting and that will be on October 21st. Tim O'Neil and his staff have agreed to host another meeting and it always is a treat to spend a day at Moselem Springs. Thank you Tim! We are inviting the folks from Philly to join us for the day and we will be playing a high/low format which can make things interesting. Hope to see you there.

At our September board meeting we voted Greg Fantuzzi as the recipient of this year's DSL award. Congratulations Greg and well deserved after a long career here in Central PA and an unprecedented 37 years at the same club. The presentation to Greg will be made during the Winter Education meeting in February.

The scholarship application and guidelines were approved at the board meeting as well. You should see these documents in the next newsletter. If there are any questions or comments please feel free to look me up anytime.

At our next board meeting we will be finalizing the golf meeting venues for next year, continuing prep for the Winter Education Meeting and tying up some loose ends for the end of the year. We are still and always will be looking for board members. If you or anyone else are interested in joining the board please let myself or one of the other board members know.

Until next time I hope everyone can try to enjoy what is supposed to be Fall and what was once the greatest time of year. Just not this year I guess.

Sincerely,

Jeff Green
President - CPGCSA

Congratulations
to the 2019 David Rafferty
Distinguished Service & Leadership Award Recipient
Gregory Fantuzzi, CGCS

Greg will be honored at the Winter Educational Meeting at Carlisle Country Club on February 18, 2020

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October Education

Our speaker for the October meeting at Moselem Springs Golf Club will be Gary V. Nolan. Gary is currently working on two degree programs at the Pennsylvania State University: a Ph.D. degree from the Dept. of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology as well as a Masters of Professional Studies in Turfgrass Science and Management from the Dept. of Plant Science. His research focus has been in the area of integrated plant health management specifically through the utilization of compounds known to possess induced systemic resistance or systemic acquired resistance modes of action within various turfgrass host species. Mr. Nolan has been in the turfgrass and landscaping industries since 1983 and has held positions of Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, General Manager, and Director of Science and Agronomy for numerous private and resort clubs as well as two national owner/operator companies. He is currently the owner of Total Turf Care, a full-service property management firm in south central Pennsylvania. He is also a partner in various non-turf related companies involved in real estate development and property management.

Title of Talk:

Evaluation of Three Commercially Available Wetting Agents on Soil Moisture Management of an L-93 Creeping Bentgrass Fairway Grown on a Pennsylvania Silt Loam Soil.

Presented By:

Gary V. Nolan, Ph.D. Student, Dept. of Plant Pathology
 Advised by: Dr. Wakar Uddin
 Master of Turfgrass Mgt Student, Dept. of Plant Science
 Advised by: Dr. Mike Fidanza
 The Pennsylvania State University

Talk Overview:

In today's world, the professional turfgrass manager has the ever more difficult task of providing healthy turfgrass and quality playing conditions to clientele with less inputs including water, fertility, and pesticides. One such issue that must be addressed is the implementation of practices that promote the responsible management of water especially during periods of drought. Such practices might include reducing the areas of turfgrass that are irrigated through the naturalization of these areas, promoting hand watering in an effort to target only those areas that may need water, utilization of turfgrass species that are better able to survive drought, as well as the utilization of commercially available wetting agents that improve the longevity and uniformity of soil water which in turn improves overall plant health. In order to address the challenge of soil moisture management, this talk will focus on the utilization of three commercially available wetting agents that have provided significant reductions in water use compared to non-wetting agent treated plots while at the same time maintaining high quality turfgrass stands. The incorporation of these types of products should be considered when developing an integrated approach to maintaining healthy turfgrass stands.

Membership News

If you know of anyone who is interested in membership into the association, please have them contact Wanda at 717-279-0368 or cpgcsa@hotmail.com.

*Please see a list of our Association
 Sponsors on Page 19.
 Please Support Them as they Support Us!*

**Membership information is also available
 on the Central Penn website at:**
www.cpgcsa.org

**If you are interested in serving on the
 CPGCSA Board of Directors, please contact
 Jeff Green at**

jeffreygreen2011@yahoo.com
jeffrey.a.green103.naf@mail.mil

Congratulations to LedgeRock's Golf Course Superintendent, Alan FitzGerald now is a United States of America citizen!

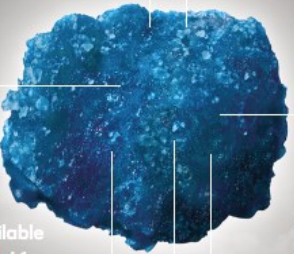
In 2006, Alan came to the states to attend school at Penn State. On graduation Alan obtained a work visa for one year; he took this opportunity and secured a job at Pine Valley. After working there, he knew he wanted to stay in the U.S. For the last ten years Alan has had temporary status to work in the states.

On August 26th, 2019, instead of renewing his green card, Alan gained his American citizenship at a ceremony in Philadelphia. Alan said, "as a kid, living in America has always been a dream, but it never seemed like it was something that could happen." He said that life made this dream fall into place; "it is great to know that I am now a part of this great country."



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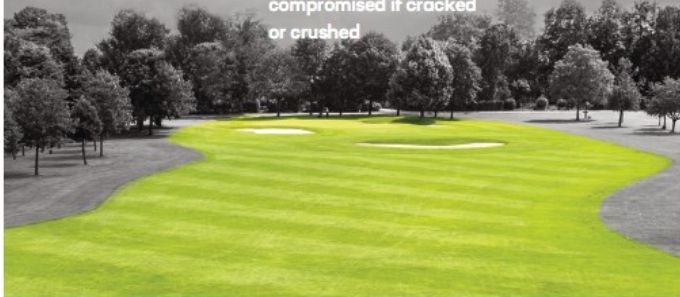
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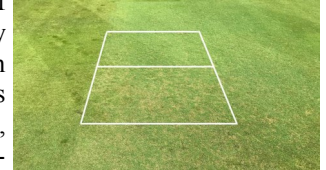


Are You Up To Speed With Your Seed?

September 20, 2019

By Paul Jacobs, Agronomist,
USGA Northeast Region

Turf damage was a common sight in the Northeast this year. This spring, many northern courses were dealing with winter injury on putting greens due to desiccation and crown hydration. Through the summer, turf decline in low-lying and poorly drained areas was common throughout the Northeast, as it was last year. In all these scenarios, seed is commonly used to reestablish fine turf areas. Fall is the ideal time to seed, for many reasons, as outlined in the recent USGA article, "[The Time To Seed Is Now.](#)" When purchasing seed, especially creeping bentgrass, it is important to look beyond cost to determine what variety of seed will best suit your needs.



Even when no plant protectants are applied, some modern varieties of creeping bentgrass will perform well. As for the older varieties – not exactly.

Modern varieties of creeping bentgrass have been developed through turf breeding programs and selected for different traits. The traits that turf breeders select for in creeping bentgrass include dollar spot resistance, early spring greenup, density and drought tolerance. New varieties are far superior to many of the older varieties, but purchasing decisions are often based on the initial cost of the seed and newer varieties can be more expensive. However, selecting seed based purely on initial cost is shortsighted because many of the older varieties are much more expensive to maintain in the long term and are not as reliable.

Some courses have gone so far as to completely regrass their fairways to benefit from improved grasses, as outlined in the USGA article, "[Fairway Regrassing – Can You Afford Not To?](#)" While regrassing may not be for everyone, there is tremendous value in doing so because of reduced maintenance costs and improved performance. The growing number of courses that have regrassed fairways or greens highlights the value of improved turf varieties.

Whether you are seeding to reestablish small areas this fall or are planning a large-scale renovation, be sure to select a modern variety that has the traits that will best suit your particular situation. The [National Turfgrass Evaluation Program \(NTEP\)](#) is a great place to get up to speed on the latest seed varieties. This data is a valuable tool, but if you are planning a large project and have time, consider experimenting with different varieties at your facility. If you would like to discuss what grasses are performing well in your region and which varieties might be most appropriate for your unique situation, don't hesitate to contact your regional [USGA agronomist](#).

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/course-care/regional-updates/northeast-region/2019/are-you-up-to-speed-with-your-seed-.html>



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Covering Isn't Just For Music

May 1, 2019

Henry DeLozier

The inimitable Elvis Presley's version of Hound Dog sold 10 million copies and holds the 19th spot on Rolling Stone's list of 500 Best Songs of All Time. But the King of Rock 'N' Roll can't claim Hound Dog entirely as his own. Elvis was covering a version recorded three years earlier by Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, an American rhythm and blues singer and songwriter.

Elvis has been accused of stealing or culturally appropriating Hound Dog. But the truth is that covering was even more popular in his day than now. The more important take-away is that we should always be paying attention to the past, learning from others and developing our own plans for success. There are three distinct plans that club leaders should have within easy reach at all times.

Strategic Plan

A strategic plan should clarify two aspects of purpose: what we are and what do we intend to accomplish. An effective strategic plan builds on the knowledge of past experience and market understanding to describe the club's goals and objectives.

All businesses benefit greatly from the discipline and clarity provided by sound strategy. Although many golf facilities lack formalized strategy, those that actively use their strategic plans hold a distinct competitive advantage. According to research completed by Global Golf Advisors, 73 percent of clubs that rely on a strategic plan to guide their operations outperform their competition.

Marketing Communications Plan

Most golf courses and private clubs do business in markets that are extremely oversupplied. Further, many of these facilities lack a current and actionable understanding of the people who are their customers, members and prospects. In highly competitive and crowded markets, the advantage goes to those who know whom they are looking for, where to find them and how to communicate with them effectively.

Effective and purposeful communication plans are target specific. Knowing how to communicate with your baby boomer audience is different than reaching millennials, for example. The best communications plans utilize multiple media and reinforce messaging on a disciplined schedule.

Most people find time only for trusted information sources. Thus, golf courses and private clubs have the advantage in most cases of being "known" to their active market segments. What tactics are working best?

- Robust and engaging websites are the platform for any communications plan today. They must be inviting, engaging and functional.
- Print communications – newsletters and postcards, for example – are sticky with many golfers, especially those over 50, and should not be disregarded even in a digital age.
- Engaging social media help create conversations within your community of members and prospects.
- Video that shows images of people enjoying the golf course and clubhouse activities help tell the club's stories in authentic ways.
- Person-to-person contact from key staff members remains a difference-maker. There is no substitute for a personal invitation.

Staffing Plan

Access to affordable labor is one of the most important operational challenges at most golf clubs. With labor costs now exceeding 55 percent of most clubs' operational expenses, thoughtful planning is essential. Borrowing ideas from the past enables managers to create meaningful relationships with employees and keep them committed to their jobs. What's more, clubs



....continued on next page.....

that encourage their best employees to recruit friends and relatives have an advantage in attracting top talent.

A reliable staffing plan identifies the utilization flow of the facility to ensure that the club is properly staffed at all times. The plan must calculate labor and payroll burden costs to enable dependable budget projections. The best staffing plans show the position title and description, number of employees required, allotted compensation and benefits, and options for flexing staff size and positions as conditions change.

Big Mama Thornton inspired Elvis to lay claim as the King of Rock 'N' Roll. Who's your inspiration, and what's your plan for success?

Henry DeLozier is a principal in the Global Golf Advisors consultancy. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.

<https://www.golfcourseindustry.com/article/covering-golf-strategy-management/>



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Please Read and Share the Following Information

Hello,

My name is Chase Straw and I am a turfgrass scientist at the University of Minnesota.

I am contacting you because we have recently released a free soil moisture mapping protocol that can be utilized by golf course superintendents to assist them with fairway irrigation decisions. The protocol explains how to collect GPS soil moisture data with a commercially available device (FieldScout TDR 350), which are then used to generate fairway soil moisture maps with free software. The maps could be used as a tool to program an irrigation system to irrigate based on the soil moisture variability across a golf course, among possibly many other things. It is simple and easy to do, where anybody from a local high school golfer to the head superintendent can follow and complete it.

More information about the protocol, in addition to details regarding how the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association of America chapter is utilizing it as a service to their members, can be read from a recent blog post on our UMN turfgrass website:

<https://turf.umn.edu/news/mapping-fairway-soil-moisture-improved-irrigation-decisions-your-golf-course>

The protocol can be downloaded here:

http://license.umn.edu/technologies/2019-332_protocol-for-golf-course-soil-moisture-mapping

The protocol requires a \$0 licensing agreement. The reason for this is we want it to remain free and we also want to monitor who downloads and completes it for our own research purposes.

I kindly ask that you consider sharing this email and the link to download the protocol with your local GCSAA chapter(s) or other turfgrass association membership. Please let me know if you have any questions.

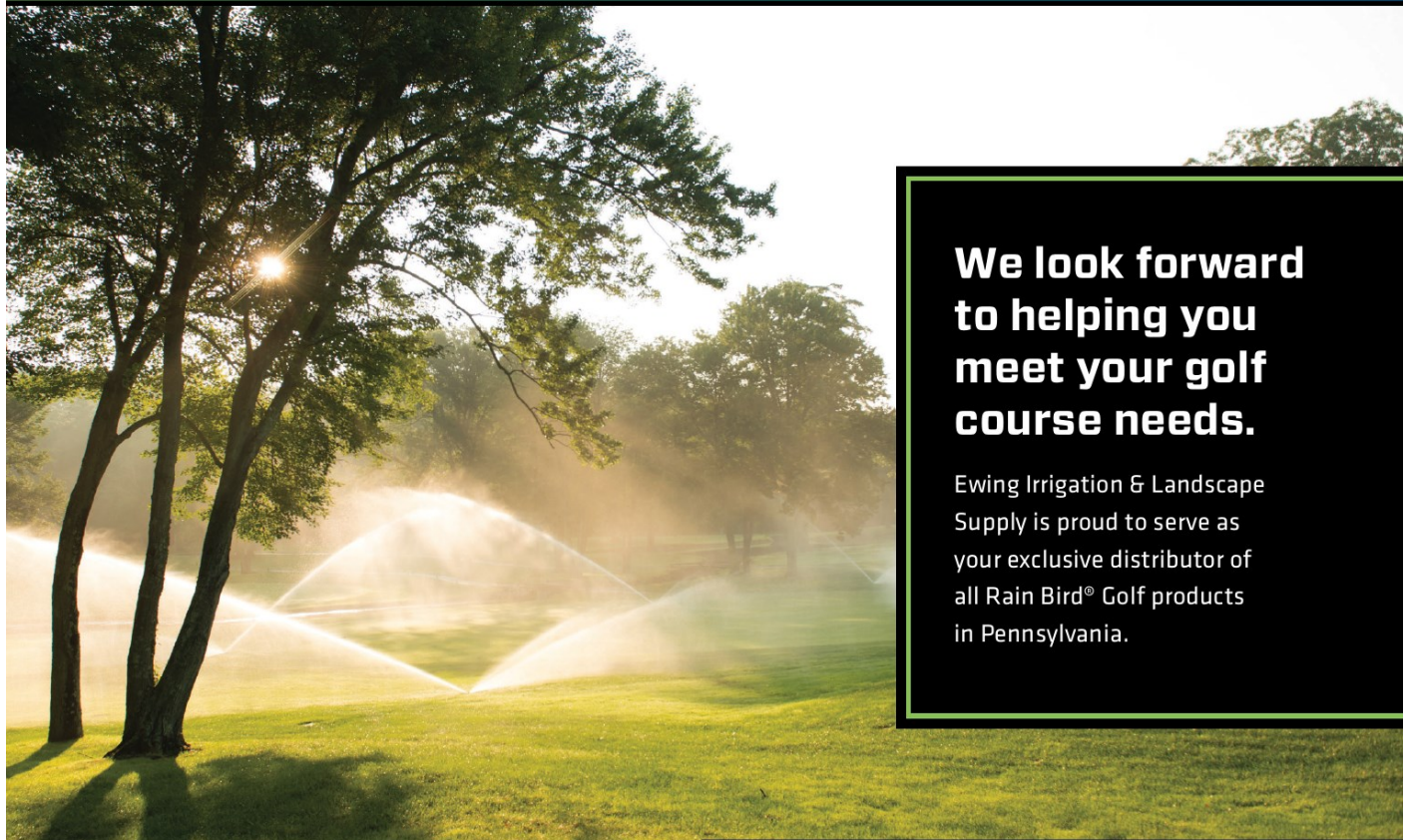
Thank you,

Chase

Chase Straw, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Research Associate – Turfgrass Science
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TABOOS & TATTOOS

The growing and surprising mental-health challenge facing golf superintendents

By Ron Whitten

By any measure, Dave Wilber is an expert in turfgrass. He started working on golf courses when he was 15. At 21, he became a superintendent in Denver. At 24, he took a job in Northern California and instituted one of the first fully organic golf-course maintenance programs in the country at Lake Wildwood Country Club, a quiet second-home community at the base of Donner Pass. That was in 1990, half a decade before sustainable golf became an industry trend.

As a leader of the movement, Wilber began advising other superintendents, and in 1993 he left Lake Wildwood to work full time as a turfgrass consultant. He was quickly in demand and became an early presence on the Internet, first as a blogger, later as a columnist, most recently with podcasts.

Big, bulky and bearded, Wilber, now 53, is passionate about his profession. He calls himself the Turfgrass Zealot and has a stock speech about his successes.

“As an independent consultant,” he says, “I’ve built golf courses on six continents, I’ve played golf on seven continents, I’ve worked in over 80 countries, I worked on more than 45 of the world’s top-100 golf courses in some advisory capacity.” Those courses include Friar’s Head in New York, Kingsbarns in Scotland and Barnboughe Dunes in Australia.

Wilber is the last person you would think would try to take his life. Yet behind his gregarious façade was self-loathing. He feared not failure, but success—as more clubs beckoned him to solve their problems, the more time he’d be away from home, slapping on his master showman smile each day, retreating each evening to the isolation of a crummy motel room. He was convinced that he wasn’t worthy of anything—not acclaim, not friendship, not love.

So in 2015, Wilber picked up a 90-day prescription, a beta-blocker for his heart rate, opened the bottle and swallowed its contents.

“I was thinking it would shut off my heart,” Wilber says. “All it did was make me super sick. I dozed off, then woke up vomiting it all up. I’m thinking, *God, I’m such a f--up I can’t even off myself. I can’t even get that job done.*”

Wilber drove himself to a local emergency room, seeking help. It wasn’t the first time he’d made such a drive.

Wilber is not the only one in the turfgrass business dealing with such an issue. Maintaining a golf course is a high-risk occupation and can put one’s physical well-being, personal relationships and mental health at risk. But revealing struggles with anxiety, depression or something worse is still considered taboo in this occupation, just as it is in many other lines of work.

Wilber admits his candor about his suicide attempt, which he revealed two years ago on the website Turfnet, might cost him his career. But he no longer cares. He believes it’s essential to bring these issues to the forefront, because it might save someone.

“When I started writing about my struggles on Turfnet,” he says, “I got an inbox full of responses from golf-course superintendents—like 60 emails—mostly supportive. One said, ‘Don’t tell anybody, but I’ve dealt with depression, too.’ Another told me, ‘I wanted to kill myself, too.’ It was mind-numbing.

“We need to get this out in the open. Real people have real struggles, and they shouldn’t have to beat themselves to death for what they are or aren’t at work.”

A worst-case scenario in the industry has long been, Lose Your Greens, Lose Your Job. The concern of Wilber, as well as others going public with their mental illness, is a far more horrifying possibility: Lose Your Greens, Take Your Life.

SOBERING NUMBERS

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention estimates that suicide is the 10th-leading cause of death in the United States. In 2017, the foundation estimates 47,173 Americans died by suicide, and there were 1.4 million attempts, though the numbers might well be under-reported.

In the past decade, there have been reports of superintendents ending their lives, most of them unconfirmed because loved ones wished to keep the information private. Perhaps the most prominent name associated with that fate is Stan George, the highly regarded, even beloved, superintendent of Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kan. In his 30 years at Prairie Dunes, George had prepared the course for many prominent tournaments, including the 2002 U.S. Women's Open and the 2006 U.S. Senior Open.

At George's funeral in 2013, friends and acquaintances quietly but openly discussed the generally accepted conclusion that his death was a suicide, the official record being sealed. No one saw it coming. One friend thought George had found bliss in a cabin he had built about 20 miles from the golf course, a place where he could get away from the job. But that's where his body was found.

HEADY HIGHS TO INCREDIBLE LOWS

At 31, Kasey Kauff was head superintendent of the Highlands Course at Atlanta Athletic Club and prepared its state-of-the-art turfgrasses for the 2011 PGA Championship. The course was so flawless that Golf Digest proclaimed it the standard by which tournament golf in the Deep South would be judged.

After a short stint in Orlando, in 2014 Kauff moved to Dallas, where he grew in the turf at the new Trinity Forest Golf Club, then prepared it for the PGA Tour's AT&T Byron Nelson the past two years. There, tour players faced a new strain of zoysia grass named for the club, which Kauff had tightly shaved everywhere to be firm, dry and springy. For his efforts, Golf Digest awarded the club its annual Green Star environmental award in 2018.



Kasey Kauff, the superintendent at Trinity Forest in Dallas.

But Kauff considered himself a failure at his personal life. He bounced from incredible highs to days where he refused to leave the house, or even get out of bed. His inability to cope with his depression and anxiety led to a failed marriage and then a failed relationship. He refused to seek counseling at first, then was reluctant to confront his problems in counseling. His depression became so deep that he began thinking about how he might kill himself. The idea became so realistic, and so frightening, that Kauff took his shotgun, which he used for duck hunting, and put it in a storage locker, then stored the shotgun shells at another location.

Do not keep them together, he remembers thinking. It's too enticing.

DEALING WITH STRESS

Jason Haines, 34, the superintendent at Sunshine Coast Golf & Country Club northwest of Vancouver, British Columbia, has felt the stress and anxiety of his profession for as long as he has been in the business. For him, it's a particularly seasonal phenomenon. For six months of the year, the weather is cool and rainy, and stress is low. But every July and August, when the temperature and humidity rise to critical levels, placing his greens in jeopardy, his anxiety also rises.

"It's something I've always battled," Haines says. "The more difficult the conditions are on the golf course, the harder you have to work, and more often than not, the worse the course looks. There's no positive feedback. You're grinding away, and the course looks like crap."

The pressure of the job came to a head one weekend a decade ago, when he was superintendent at nearby Pender Harbor Golf Course. Haines was on a backhoe, digging a trench to fix an irrigation break in the middle of a fairway about 100 yards off a tee box. He'd just let one group of golfers play through when another golfer appeared on the tee and hit a ball over him and into the group ahead. Then a second golfer teed off, and the ball hit the backhoe, just inches from Haines' head. Haines screamed at the golfer, jumped off the machine and charged at him. He ran the golfer off the course and into the parking lot, cursing at him to never come back. He actually made the guy cry.

"At the time, I had no idea why I completely lost it," Haines says. "I didn't hit him, but it was close. It was an overreaction, for sure. I shouldn't have screamed at him. But I still would have asked him to leave."

"That time of year everyone is pretty high-strung—even golfers," Haines says. "But hitting into the group ahead? What's with that? You come out on the golf course on the busiest weekend of the year and you expect to play a three-hour round? That's not realistic."

"That was the one time I let my emotions get the best of me. I learned from it."

PANIC ATTACKS

Miranda Robinson, 34, goes by the nickname of Moe, a nickname her two brothers gave her in her youth, and by the turf-related variation of Mow on social media. She has been in the course-maintenance business since 2005. "I brought my anxiety with me when I joined the industry," she says, "although I didn't recognize in the beginning how stressful the job would be."

The history that Robinson recites is enough to give anyone pause. She says she grew up with an alcoholic father. One brother was epileptic, and she coached him through many seizures. Eventually he became addicted to drugs. With support from her family, both are now in recovery.

“I’ve always been the extrovert, the person everyone relied on,” she says. “I still am. I tend to take on everyone’s feelings, and I didn’t fully realize how much it was affecting me.”

Then one of Robinson’s close friends, Trish, a high school valedictorian, prom queen and president of the athletic union, died from cancer at 20.

“She was the most incredible person I’d ever met,” Robinson says. “She was destined to do the best things in life, and suddenly she was gone.”

“My whole life came crashing down on me. I was working nights at a General Motors assembly plant. I found out that my boyfriend had cheated on me with some girl, so we broke up. Then one day, my arms went numb and I couldn’t breathe. I thought I was having a heart attack and dying. I went to a hospital, and they told me I’d suffered a panic attack. That was the first time I’d ever heard of that.”

She went to a family doctor, who gave her an antidepressant. She took it for two months but suffered more panic attacks, so she quit the medication, deciding to research what caused such sensations and how to battle them. At the same time, she quit her General Motors job, which she hated, despite its \$32-per-hour wage, and joined a couple of girlfriends working for \$8 an hour on the summer maintenance crew at Oliver’s Nest Golf Club near Toronto.

“I thought it would be something to distract my brain,” she says. “I love being outside, being in nature. It really helped me at first. Then as I took on more management roles, I started to realize how much it was playing a part in my anxiety.”

She’d taken a full-time job at the course and rapidly moved up from staff member to assistant superintendent to head superintendent. In 2016, she became the superintendent at Summerlea Golf Club in Port Perry, Ontario.

“It’s an 18-hole executive course, a mom-and-pop place where I could be comfortable and not worry about my anxiety,” Robinson says. “The owner was younger than me and female. I went into my interview saying, ‘I have an anxiety disorder, and some days I’ll just need to either leave or not come in for a couple of hours, just to keep myself sane.’ And she was like, ‘Yep, I totally appreciate that.’ So she hired me, and it was perfect.”

Still, life has a way of sometimes tossing a brick into the most spotless of windshields. One day, Robinson was asked to check on an acquaintance who hadn’t answered the phone. She found the person unconscious in a bathroom, the result of swallowing a bottle of pills. Robinson made sure the person coughed up all the pills and urged an emergency-room visit.

Robinson also had a friend who had developed ALS. She’d visit him periodically, trying to stay upbeat for his sake, each time sobbing uncontrollably on the drive home.

She experienced more panic attacks, and after a bad break-up with her live-in boyfriend, she quit her job and moved as far away as she could, to British Columbia, taking an assistant superintendent’s position at Cordova Bay Golf Club. But her anxiety followed her. “It’s been more than 15 years,” she says, “and I’m just now getting a grasp on how to navigate through life with this.”

SUPPORT GROUP

What these four people have in common, besides their dedication to the craft and their struggles with mental-health issues, is that they know one another. In the past two years, they have met and corresponded, summoning the courage to talk about intimate details and listening attentively to the others. They’ve formed an informal support group that’s willing to include and embrace others in the turfgrass industry who might be struggling in silence.

These four are quick to point out that their profession is not unique. Stress, anxiety and depression can be far greater among those who routinely deal in life-and-death situations: police officers, firefighters, airline pilots, air-traffic controllers, surgeons. But it’s not a contest about which job description is the most hazardous to one’s health. These four are focused on the turfgrass industry because they know from experience the unique tribulations that accompany their profession.

Every course superintendent, whether at a high-end private club or a low-budget nine-hole layout, faces expectations from the clientele that are often unreasonable. It can be like having 200 bosses. Superintendents try their best to meet or exceed expectations, but they can’t control the weather, and there are no universal antidotes. Each golf course is unique, and variables can confound the task

of growing grass. It's all solvable, but it depends on time, money and workers, three things nearly every superintendent lacks in some degree.

There's no denying that the inherent pressures of the occupation can add to the inner struggles. If the demands become overwhelming, why not find a less-stressful occupation? "Because this is what I love to do," Kauff says. "I've never done anything else. It's what I'm good at."

GOOD STRESS VERSUS BAD STRESS

Joseph LeFevre (pronounced la-fay) has a master's in clinical psychology, and for the past 20 years he has practiced marriage and family therapy in San Jose. During that time, he has counseled hundreds on issues of stress, anxiety and depression, including some in the golf industry, and recently addressed a regional conference of superintendents on stress management.

Stress, LeFevre told them, is a normal part of human existence. It helps us grow and achieve. Some stress is good, because it teaches us how to develop coping skills. Starting a new job, getting married and buying a house are examples of good stress. But bad stress can lead to anxiety or depression. LeFevre defines anxiety as an exaggerated response to something that is troubling or unknown. Anxiety can range from panic attacks, which are normally a temporary condition, to severe anxiety disorders.

Depression is a bit different. LeFevre defines depression as a deepening response of sadness or hopelessness, often brought on by something troubling or unknown. It, too, has many classifications of severity, with the worst form usually associated with morbidity.

"There can be neurochemistry at work in both," LeFevre says. "Our neurochemistry helps us rebound if we're experiencing a high or a low. But if the neurotransmitters in our brain aren't sufficient, we lose that healthy balance. The neurotransmitters can be adjusted by medication, exercise, diet, rest or a combination of those."

But it's not all biological, he says. Two people can have the same diet, exercise routine and amount of sleep and still experience totally different moods. This is where the stress of an occupation comes into play.

At one end, LeFevre says, are a tiny number of people who thrive on extreme stress, as if it's a constant adrenaline rush. At the other extreme are a tiny number who can't deal with stress at all and sometimes become suicidal. In between are the vast majority, who tolerate the stress of their work, or struggle with it, but learn to adapt. A few in the center might consider quitting their jobs to relieve the stress, but they would rarely think of quitting their lives. As for golf-course superintendents, LeFevre says, stress reduction can be as easy as lowering expectations. "Excellence is a worthy, achievable goal," he says. "Perfection is unattainable."

A similar message has been expressed by Paul MacCormack in his blog, *The Mindful Superintendent*. MacCormack, 45, is superintendent and general manager of Fox Meadows Golf Course in the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. His friend Jason Haines considers him the pioneer of mental-health awareness among superintendents.

MacCormack has written his blog for the website Turfnet since late 2012. He bases many of his observations on his experiences, the 14-hour workdays that put his marriage in jeopardy, the burnout that caused him to leave the business for six months, the job offer he accepted only after promising his wife that things would be different. He credits his self-awareness to a book his wife gave him, *After The Ecstasy, The Laundry*, by Jack Kornfield, a longtime proponent of Buddhist mindfulness. MacCormack is now training with Kornfield to become a certi-

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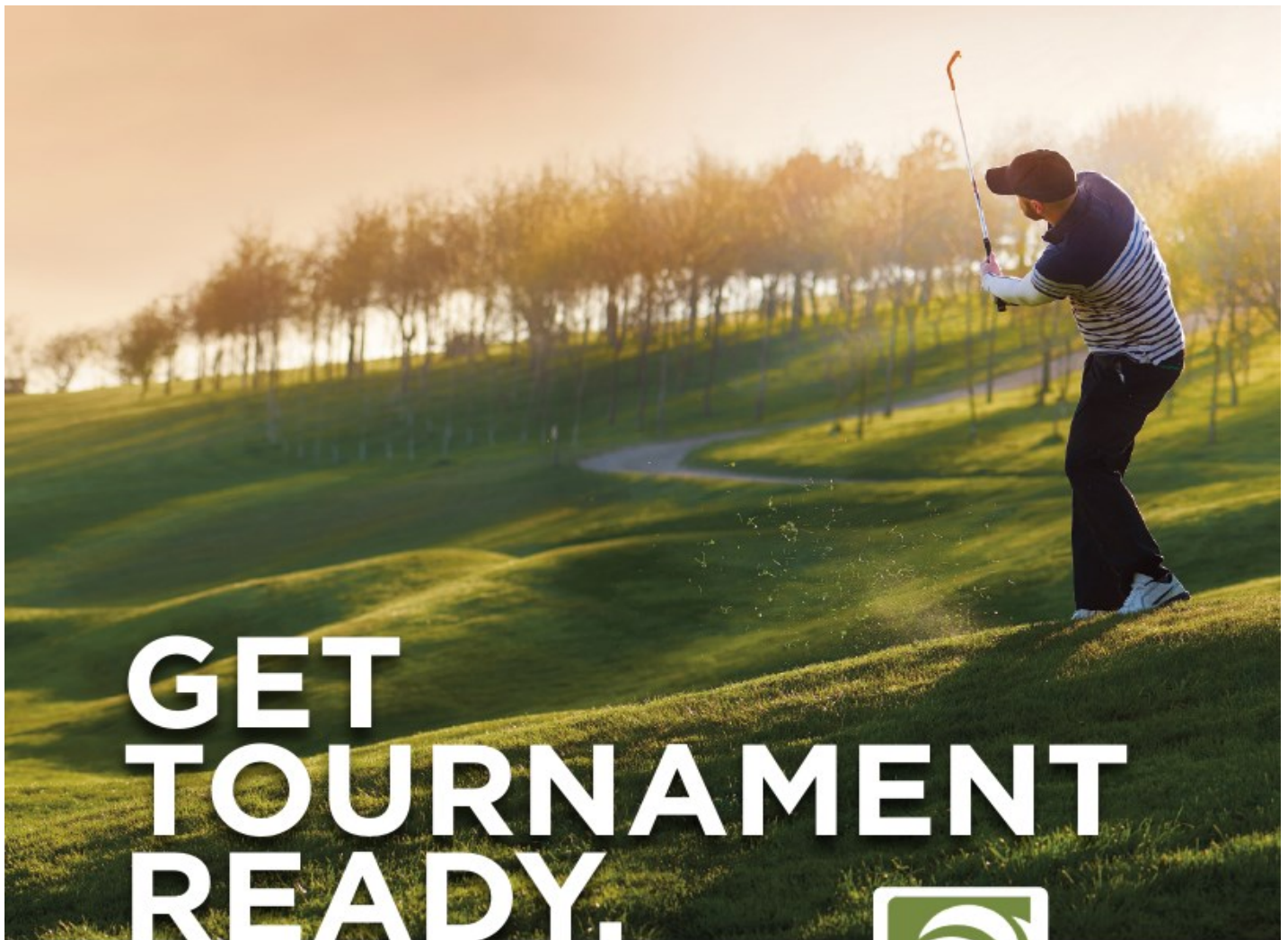
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fied mindfulness instructor. “I’ve learned better ways to manage my stress,” MacCormack says. “My life is now better, and work is easier. I do far less now than I’ve ever done in my career, but I’m way better at what I do. Because I zero in on what needs to be done, and I don’t fret about the stuff that we’ll get to when we get to it.”

In 2018, inspired by MacCormack’s blog, Haines filmed a 20-minute video titled, *Why Am I So Stressed?* Within a day of posting it, he says, he received more than 100 messages from superintendents who told him they were feeling the same way. But he also got trolled. One respondent wrote in part, “Jason Haines is a snowflake superintendent. All snowflakes easily melt under the scrutiny of science, reason and sanity.”

Haines was offended. “It’s a slur implying we’re delicate and weak,” he says. “What’s so bad about having emotions and sharing them?” His friend Wilber was also offended and came to his defense, tweeting, “Snowflake was a word the Nazis used to describe the Jews they were going to ‘melt’ in the ovens. You might want to think about a better choice of words. I doubt you’d speak this way to any of us if we were at the same table.”

When Kasey Kauff revealed his mental-health issues on Twitter in late 2018, one respondent told him to “Put your big-boy panties on.” Another said Kauff was simply “facing a case of the Blue Mondays,” though Kauff says club members have been very supportive.

Internalizing stress, anxiety or depression is never healthy, LeFevre says. Yet in most businesses today, there exists a culture of denial, especially among men, who refuse to expose their inner selves.

“It’s a matter of identity,” LeFevre says. “We tie our self-worth with our occupation. That becomes our identity, and we can’t deal with the possibility of losing our identity.”

“It’s ingrained in our society. When we meet someone new, we never ask, ‘What do you do in your spare time?’ We always ask, ‘What do you do for a living?’ ”

Calling Haines a snowflake? In his spare time, Jason serves as a team leader on a 30-man search-and-rescue team in British Columbia. In July 2018, his team roped down a 300-foot cliff to rescue five climbers who’d become stuck halfway up. After Haines and his team completed that task, they were rushed to the scene of an airplane crash, where they retrieved three survivors.

For the past two years, MacCormack has jointly presented, with his friend Chris Tritabaugh, superintendent at Hazeltine National in Minnesota, a Mindful Superintendent seminar at the Golf Industry Show, the annual conference and trade fair conducted by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). In 2019, the seminar was one of the few sessions that was sold out in advance, with a crowd in excess of the room capacity of 150. For the 2020 show, MacCormack proposed a session that would feature Haines, Wilber, Kauff and Robinson.

The GCSAA turned down the proposal.

“They told me they really liked the idea, but they had a few liability questions,” MacCormack says. “They felt if somebody in the audience really posed a difficult question on suicide, it would be more helpful to have a professional therapist on the panel to help field a question like that, because none of us are experts on the stuff. To tell you the truth, they’re totally right.”

But Kauff and Wilber were frustrated by the decision. Kauff wrote on his Twitter feed, “Maybe others would realize they aren’t alone and feel courage to seek help. You can live with this and be successful. That would be the message.” Wilbur

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tweeted, “I am indeed an expert on my own life. And that’s what I was asked to share.”

Shelia Finney, a former course superintendent now in her third year as GCSAA’s senior director of member programs, says the organization is dedicated to addressing the mental well-being of its membership. Finney says there will be five seminars at the 2020 Golf Industry Show devoted to various aspects of mental health, including MacCormack’s Mindful Superintendent. The others are tentatively titled Better Thoughts for Better Living, Emotional Intelligence for the Turf Professional, Managing Stress and Avoiding Burnout, and Demons of Greenkeeping.

Finney adds that a popular free education session, Lightning-round Learning, designed to cover many topics and engage audience participation, will feature a round on suicide prevention led by Lori A. Hoffner, a longtime suicide-intervention specialist from Denver.

“I applaud them,” MacCormack says. “If something said during this short talk illuminates something and saves a life, then it’s worth every penny.” MacCormack says he intends to again submit his proposed panel discussion for the 2021 conference, including a professional therapist.



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September Meeting at Huntsville Golf Club - - After the golfers leave... the residents come back.

'NOTHING TIME'

Each person dealing with mental-health issues must develop his or her own coping mechanisms, ideally in consultation with a professional, LeFevre says. Robinson says she no longer sees a therapist but sets aside definite time for herself.

"I call it my Nothing Time," she says. "It's time when I do nothing at all, like just sitting in the yard and staring at the clouds. Or it's time when Nothing Else Matters, except what I'm doing. I might be doing something artistic that day. Or I might climb a hill and stand at the summit. Or go on a long car ride to a place I've never been before.

"The point is, it's time for myself, to have my personal thoughts and be at peace. That's the time I regenerate my mental health."

Jason Haines says he has learned to relax and meditate. His search-and-rescue training has helped, because it includes professional counseling. He is also more cognizant of anticipating problems to take preventive measures, with regard to his golf course and his health.

"I know August is the time of year when I'm going to feel stressed," he says. "Last August, I knew it was coming, so I set aside some family time. It wasn't perfect, but last August was the best I've felt in any August in years. I like to think what I'm doing is working."

Dave Wilber, who has experienced nearly 30 years of depression, several panic attacks, a divorce, suicidal thoughts and two suicide attempts, figures that he'll likely be on antidepressants for the rest of his life. He sees a therapist twice a month, tries to meditate daily and has simplified his life.



"My days of 245 nights a year on the road are over," he says. "In the digital age, we can video things back and forth. I can attend greens-committee meetings via Skype. I can review irrigation data remotely."

Kasey Kauff also takes an antidepressant and participates in yoga therapy.

"It's intensive," he says. "We'll talk for 40 minutes about any anxious feelings I might have. Then we'll apply yoga principles, breathing techniques, to ground myself, to resolve issues for myself.

"Most of my anxieties are ridiculous these days," Kauff says. "I'm a huge Dave Matthews fan, and I recently traveled to Wisconsin to attend a concert. When I got to the hotel room, I kept debating whether I should go to the concert or stay in the room. *Should I go? No, don't go! No, go! No, don't do it!* I finally forced myself to get up and go to the show, and I had a great time. But that's the sort of thing I face."

On his right wrist, Kauff has tattoos of three stars, because, he says, he's a dreamer. They're deliberately misaligned because he feels imperfections are beautiful. Last December, Kauff added another tattoo among the stars. It's a semicolon, symbolizing solidarity against suicide. The tattoo symbol was popularized by Amy Bleuel, who founded a suicide-prevention organization in Wisconsin and called it Project Semicolon because, as she told *People* magazine in 2015, "In literature, a semicolon is used when an author chooses not to end a sentence."

Bleuel died in 2017 at 31, a suspected suicide.

<https://www.golfdigest.com/story/the-growing-and-surprising-mental-health-challenge-facing-golf-superintendents>

HOW TO GET HELP, AND WARNING SIGNS WHEN SOMEONE IS AT RISK

THE TOLL-FREE number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **1-800-273-8255**, provides free, confidential support for people in distress and is monitored 24/7. The number automatically transfers callers to a trained crisis worker in their area code. The organization's website, suicidepreventionlifeline.org, offers additional assistance, including these warning signs to help determine if someone is at risk:

- Talking of wanting to die.
- Talking of wanting to kill themselves.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or purchasing a weapon.
- Talking about feeling hopeless.
- Talking about having no reason to live.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- An increase in the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Anxious or agitated behavior.
- Acting recklessly.
- Sleeping excessively.
- Getting too little sleep.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Showing rage.
- Talking about seeking revenge.
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