

# The Idaho Golf Course Superintendents Association

# Grass Clippings

July 2024

## 2024 Fall Meeting



McCall, Idaho, is calling us! The Idaho GCSA Fall Meeting, October 7 & 8, 2024 conference will be held at McCall Golf Club. The board meeting is October 6. Our conference agenda is not the only a reason to return

to this wonderful destination location after six years — we are offering three unique opportunities in addition to the quality education you expect. Regardless of your budget size, the education will be beneficial. Our featured speakers are Doug Karcher, Ph.D.,

Professor & Chair, Horticulture and Crop Science, The Ohio State University and John Fech, Horticulturist and ISA Certified Arborist, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Doug Karcher, Ph.D., (left) has been widely known for his extensive knowledge on numerous subjects over the years, including wetting agents — our selected topic for the upcoming meeting. Karcher was awarded two US patents for inventions related to determining nitrogen levels and quality characteristics in plant systems using digital image analysis. He also authored “Turf Analyzer” software that is used by turf-



*Wetting Agents and Their Effects on Putting Green Surfaces*

grass scientists to assess turfgrass research. Karcher’s research background is in turfgrass soil management and cultural practices with an aim to improve turf quality while minimizing environmental impacts.

John Fech (right) works extensively with the media to extend the message of landscape sustainability and best management practices for trees and turf. The author of two books and over 400 popular and trade journal articles, he focuses his time on teaching effective landscape maintenance techniques, water conservation, diagnosing turf and ornamental problems and encouraging effective bilingual communication in the green industry.

In addition to the very popular silent auction held in conjunction

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*10 Signs that You Have Tree Safety/Health Issues*

*Abiotic Tree Disorders – Little Known Secret*

## Advocating for Golf: A Glimpse into the National Golf Day

**Matthew Gourlay, CGCS, MG, AGS**  
Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho

Recently, I had the privilege to partake in National Golf Day (May 7-10), an event that underscores golf’s significance to local communities and the national economy. I also serve on the GCSAA’s Government Affairs Task Group.

National Golf Day serves as a pivotal platform for leaders in the golf industry, including superintendents like myself, to engage with policymakers on Capitol Hill. Our aim is to advocate for policies that foster the growth and sustainability of our industry. From tax incentives for golf course renovations to initiatives promoting water conservation, our discussions encompass a broad spectrum of topics vital to our profession’s success.

Participating in National Golf Day affords me invaluable insights into the legislative process and enables direct communication of our industry’s needs to lawmakers. By sharing tangible examples from Hillcrest Country Club and other golf courses in Idaho, we can illustrate golf’s positive impact on local economies, job creation, and environmental stewardship.

Yet, our advocacy efforts extend beyond a single day of meetings in Washington, D.C. The GCSAA Government Affairs Task Group works tirelessly year-round to monitor legislation, formulate policy positions, and cultivate relationships with elected officials across all levels of government. By actively engaging in the political sphere, we can influence decision-making that directly impacts our ability to maintain and enhance golf courses like Hillcrest.

## Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room & Hotel Block

The location and experience was fantastic the first time, so we were quick to jump on the opportunity to return to The Blind Burro for the Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room, February 5, 2025, in San Diego held in conjunction with the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. This great evening with friends and colleagues is made possible by our generous sponsors in the Northwest. Our three-chapter room block in San Diego will be announced soon via email blasts.

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**Info about Idaho GCSA website!**

- \* Do you have an address change? Changing the information on Your Profile in the Member's Area will automatically update the association's database! Use of proper capitalization and spelling is appreciated.
- \* Do you have any classified items? Please be sure to complete the classified section in the Member's Area.
- \* **Your username is always your email address.** To set your password click on forgot password and follow the prompts.

"The Idaho Golf Course Superintendents Association is dedicated to helping its members provide the best playing conditions in an environmentally friendly manner."

# President's Article

## Golf Course Renovations

Brandon Crim, President  
Centennial Golf Course, Nampa, Idaho



Over the winter we did several renovations and are planning on more in the near future. We fully redid our parking lot, which is not fun when you don't have a real as-built and don't know where everything runs, and your guidelines are to take the lowest bid!

We also remodeled the clubhouse, which looks really good. We are in the process of getting bids for an irrigation renovation design and plan to move forward in October of 2025! Yay! Lastly, we are working on tee renovations — some in-house and some contracted out.

I'm not good at figuring out what to write, so I added in a paper I wrote in school mixed with some newly added stuff about tee renovations. Enjoy!

### Centennial Golf Course: A Snapshot

Centennial Golf Course has been serving Treasure Valley golfers for over 30 years. In the mid 1980s a group of passionate community leaders and citizens led a grassroots campaign to fund and build Nampa's first golf course. Completed in 1987, Centennial Golf Course quickly became and remains a Valley favorite. Known for its large contoured fairways and putting surfaces, Centennial was designed to accommodate a broad range of golf abilities. Centennial also offers some of the most affordable golf rates in the Valley.

### Reasons for Tee Renovation

#### *Wear and Tear Over Time*

Golf course tees endure significant wear and tear due to heavy foot traffic, divot damage, and environmental factors. This can lead to uneven surfaces, poor grass coverage, and overall deterioration, negatively impacting the quality of play and course aesthetics. Centennial Golf Course, with its high visitor turnout, particularly benefits from periodic tee renovations to maintain its standards.

#### *Course Modernization*

Golf course design trends and player expectations evolve, and

older courses may require updates to stay competitive. Renovating tees can be part of a broader modernization effort, aligning the course with contemporary standards and enhancing its appeal to new and returning golfers. At Centennial we are in the process of updating our facilities to continue attracting a diverse range of golfers.

#### *Improved Playability*

Tees that are too small, uneven, or improperly oriented can detract from the golfing experience. Renovating tees allows for adjustments in size, shape, and alignment, creating a more enjoyable and challenging game for players of all skill levels. Centennial Golf Course aims to provide a balanced challenge to all its visitors, from beginners to seasoned golfers.

#### *Water and Resource Management*

Older tee areas might not be optimized for efficient water use and maintenance. Renovating tees provides an opportunity to incorporate sustainable practices, such as improved drainage systems and drought-resistant turf, reducing long-term maintenance costs and environmental impact. This is particularly important in regions like Idaho, where water conservation is a priority.

#### *Enhancing the Player Experience and Course Longevity*

Tee renovation is a critical aspect of golf course maintenance and improvement. A well-executed tee renovation can significantly enhance the playability and aesthetic appeal of a course, and offer a better experience for golfers while ensuring the course remains in top condition for years to come.

#### **Benefits of Adding Tees at Shorter Distances for Senior Players and Children**

#### *Inclusivity and Accessibility*

Adding tees at shorter distances makes the course

continued page 4

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**President's Article** continued from page 3

more inclusive and accessible to a broader range of players, including seniors and children. Shorter tees can help speed up the pace of play, as senior players and children are more likely to reach greens in regulation from these distances. This allows them to enjoy the game without the physical strain of playing from standard tee distances, making the sport more welcoming and enjoyable for all age groups.

**Enhanced Learning and Skill Development**

For children and beginners, shorter tees provide a more manageable and less intimidating introduction to golf. This can help build confidence and encourage skill development, fostering a lifelong love for the game. For seniors, it allows them to continue enjoying golf without the frustration of struggling with longer distances.

**Social and Health Benefits**

Providing shorter tees encourages seniors to stay active and engaged in the sport, promoting physical fitness and social interaction. For children, it offers a fun, outdoor activity that can be enjoyed with family and friends, contributing to their overall well-being.

**Benefits of Adding Longer Tees to**

**Challenge Better Players**

**Increased Challenge**

Adding longer tees creates a more challenging course layout, testing the skills and abilities of advanced players. Longer tees require greater precision, strategy, and strength, making the course more engaging for competitive golfers.

**Attracting Competitive Events**

A course with longer tees can attract higher-level competitions and tournaments, bringing in skilled golfers and raising the profile of the golf course. Hosting prestigious events can enhance the reputation of Centennial Golf Course and draw in spectators and participants from a wider region.

**Improving Player Development**

For golfers looking to improve their game, longer tees offer an opportunity to develop their skills further. Playing from extended distances can help players work on their long game, accuracy, and course management, contributing to their overall growth as golfers.

**Catering to a Diverse Range of Players and Increasing Participation and Memberships**

By providing both shorter and longer tees, Centennial Golf Course can cater to



and attract a broad spectrum of players, from beginners, recreational golfers and families playing together, to advanced and professional players. This inclusivity enhances the overall appeal of the course and ensures that all players can find a suitable challenge, which contributes to a more vibrant golfing community.

**Steps Involved in Tee Renovation**

**Design and Layout**

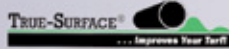
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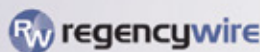


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**President's Article** continued from page 4

plan is created. This includes determining the optimal size, shape, and orientation of each tee box, considering factors such as sun exposure, wind direction, and sightlines. The design should also account for different teeing options to accommodate players of varying skill levels.

**Soil Preparation and Grading**

Proper soil preparation is crucial for establishing healthy turf and ensuring long-term durability. This involves removing existing turf, amending the soil as needed, and grading the tee surface to achieve the desired level and slope. Effective grading ensures proper drainage, preventing waterlogging and promoting healthy grass growth.

**Turf Installation**

Selecting the right turf species is essential

for the success of the renovation. Drought-resistant and wear-tolerant grass varieties are often preferred. The turf can be installed through seeding, sodding, or sprigging, depending on the course's timeline and budget. Ensuring proper irrigation during the establishment phase is critical for turf health.

**Irrigation and Drainage**

Upgrading irrigation and drainage systems is a key component of tee renovation. Efficient irrigation systems reduce water usage and ensure even coverage, while effective drainage prevents water buildup, which can damage the turf and soil structure. Modernizing these systems contributes to the long-term sustainability of the course.

**Final Touches and Grow-In Period**

Once the major construction and turf installation are complete, the focus shifts to the finishing touches, such as installing tee markers, yardage signs, and other amenities. A grow-in period follows, during which the turf establishes itself fully. During this time, regular maintenance, including mowing, watering, and fertilizing, is crucial to ensure the tees are ready for play.

**Benefits of Tee Renovation**

**Enhanced Player Experience**

Renovated tees provide a more enjoyable

and challenging playing experience. Golfers appreciate well-maintained, level tee boxes that offer better footing and consistent lies, contributing to a more satisfying game.

**Improved Aesthetics**

Aesthetically pleasing tees enhance the overall visual appeal of the golf course. Well-designed and maintained tees can significantly boost the course's reputation, attracting more players and potentially increasing membership and revenue.

**Increased Course Longevity**

Investing in tee renovation extends the lifespan of the course by addressing issues that could lead to further deterioration. Improved drainage, better turf health, and efficient irrigation systems reduce long-term maintenance needs and costs.

**Environmental Benefits**

Incorporating sustainable practices into tee renovation projects, such as using drought-resistant turf and efficient irrigation systems, reduces the course's environmental footprint. These practices conserve water and reduce the need for chemical inputs, promoting a healthier ecosystem.

In closing, I hope sharing our experience and reasoning helps someone else considering a renovation.

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**Cam Kinsman &  
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*(Sage Lakes Golf Course)*

**Chris Inglis &  
Nathan Ferrell**  
*(Targhee Village Golf Course)*

Working on the golf course is a pinnacle part of my life that has brought me many opportunities and has really shown me that being an assistant in training has been the job I never knew I needed. Before I found the golf course, sports have always been my passion. In high school, I played whatever sport was in season and always put in the extra work to reach my maximum potential. I worked at a hotel next to the Whitetail golf course to keep busy. This job brought in the money I needed to invest in my future, but it wasn't my favorite. I still worked hard knowing that hard work always pays off. At the time, I was still in high school and wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to pursue as a career. Soon enough I became tired of doing the monotonous work indoors. While I worked inside, I could see my dad and brother working outside on the golf course surrounded by green grass and lovely trees. As you can imagine, this didn't help my situation and I became even more antsy knowing I was missing out on that fresh outside air. Luckily my dad, being the amazing man he is, encouraged me to get a job on the golf course.

I started with mowing tees, raking bunkers, and watering flowers. These are

# My Turfgrass Journey

**Nancy Cienfuegos,  
Assistant in Training  
Whitetail Golf Club  
McCall, Idaho**

all pretty simple jobs, but I was overjoyed to be where I was. The longer I worked there the more I became aware of the job opportunities available on the golf course. After I became comfortable doing those simple jobs, my dad vouched for me to start mowing greens. I remember the nerves I felt with doing something new on the golf course, but I was confident in my ability to succeed. My dad has always pushed me to be better than I let myself believe I can be. He used to tell me never to say, "I don't know" or "I can't" when doing things. He always reminded me to be open to new opportunities, because even learning is an opportunity. At this time, I was going to school to be a



physical therapist. This made sense to me because sports were always my passion. As time went on, I started to learn the "ins and outs" of the golf course, my confidence grew, and my passion was sparked.

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I realized my true passion was on the golf course. I was sitting in the classroom studying to be a physical therapist and all I could think about was how much I missed the golf course. All I wanted to do was to be outside working on the greens! I decided to change direction and do what made me truly happy, working outside on the golf course with some amazing people.

I always knew I was onto bigger and better things when golf was involved. Fast forward two years. I had been working at the golf course full time, was promoted to grounds supervisor, and took a turfgrass course from the Great Lakes School of Turfgrass Management. After taking the course I discovered my end goal was to become a golf course superintendent. I spoke to Rick Mooney about my desire, and he mentioned my interest to Kimberly Gard. Soon after, she contacted me to participate with the volunteer team "Women in Turf." Through this, I met lots of strong women dedicated to the turfgrass industry. It also allowed me to work on the U.S. Women's Open at Pine Needles with 30 strong women who were so inspiring. I realized I wanted to be a part of this group of women and their success in the turfgrass industry. I participated in events such as the Little League Softball World Series and the U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2, which helped me gain connections and gave me a network of strong and dedicated people in the turfgrass industry. I really enjoy the excitement of the major golf tournaments because we take pride in the work and dedication we put into prepping the course.

I knew what I wanted to do and my goals were now to gain a top-tier education, become confident in myself, and become part of something much bigger than I am. This led me to apply for the Allan MacCarrach Jr. award to attend the Rutgers University of Turfgrass Management. I was blessed to win this scholarship to help me financially through the schooling I need to advance my career. I have completed my first year at Rutgers, and am currently working as an intern at Whitetail Club. I have been lucky to be surrounded by strong people such as Rick Mooney, Adam Lott, and Nick Korthals, who have all given me the support and confidence to learn what it takes to succeed in my field. It has been a privilege to work for and be a part of the Whitetail Golf Club and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I am excited to return to Rutgers and complete my second year to obtain my certificate in Turfgrass Management. This journey has been a lot of work, but every ounce of time and hard work has been worth it. As Bruce Lee says, "Preparation for tomorrow is hard work today." My goals have been set, and I know where I want to be. Now all I have to do is continue to follow my goals and dedicate myself to my future career as a successful golf course superintendent.

## **Seeking donations for the Fall Meeting Silent Auction**

**October 7 & 8, 2024**

\*\*\*

## **Spring Meeting & Trade Show February 18 & 19, 2025**

with this meeting (it is easy to donate with the online link available when pre-registration opens), and the opportunity for the great conversations always found when golfing with your peers at our host course (McCall Golf Club), there are three items unique this year, as mentioned above.

The first is to wish our host, Eric McCormick, GCS, McCall Golf Club, the very best with his retirement on December 6. Eric has been an active and dedicated member of the Idaho GCSA, and certainly well-loved. He has worked hard over the years to help build the educational offerings, and the Idaho GCSA is stronger thanks to his participation. Personally, it is because of Eric I have had the pleasure to work with you all for these past 25 years. Eric and Steve Maas traveled to a Peaks & Prairies GCSA event and soon after, reached out to me.

Secondly, four of our members will share with you something that they dealt with at their facility in 2024. It could be anything from repairs, to projects, to staffing, to planning, to numerous other options. With all the responsibilities you have, the options for discussions are endless. Thanks to these folks who have graciously agreed to participate in "We (have almost) Made it Through the 2024 Season": Shane Shaffer, Redhawk Golf Course, Nampa, Idaho; Adam Lott, Whitetail Golf Club, McCall, Idaho; Bart Brandell, Jerome Country Club, Jerome, Idaho, and Brandon Crim, Centennial Golf Course, Nampa, Idaho.

Lastly, Whitetail Golf Club is planning a First Green Event for Tuesday afternoon. Working within the period of time between our conference closing and the classes of children being on their return bus at 2:15 p.m., the grounds team at Whitetail could use your volunteer help with their stations during this 90-minute window! While assistance is appreciated, you can also choose to just observe the event. Either will go a long way to familiarize yourself with how to host an event at your facility sometime! And with the mid-afternoon ending, you travelers still have lots of daylight to hit the road!

We look forward to seeing you in McCall! Online conference registration will be open early August. Click on the calendar event of [idahogcsa.org](http://idahogcsa.org), and there you can register and pay with a credit/debit card, or request an invoice.

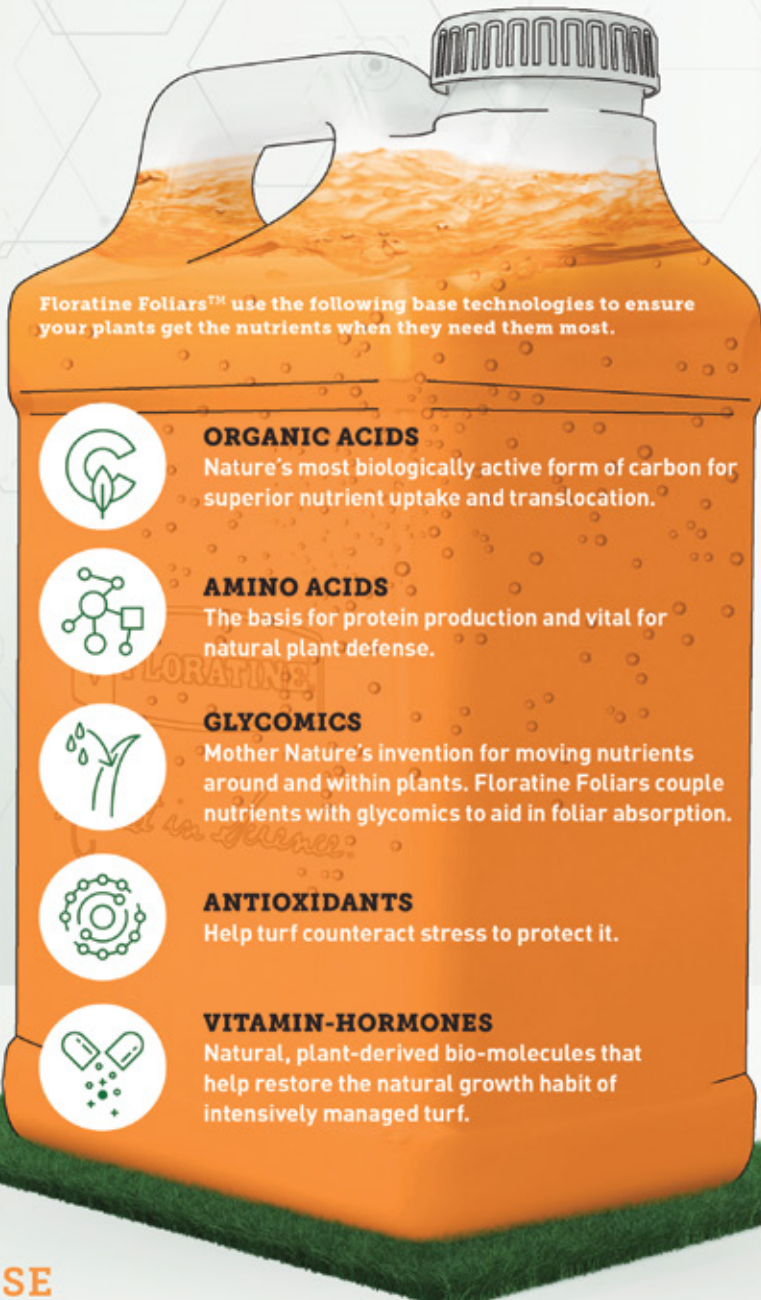
## **Seeking an Assistant Who Wants to Make a Difference in Leadership Role**

Would you like to make meaningful connections with superintendents and improve your resume? Our board-appointed Assistant Liaison to the Board of Directors position is available. We are seeking interested candidates for the position, which is important to the board as it helps to offer the perspective of our diverse membership.

What does it entail? We ask that you participate in the two board meetings each year, held in conjunction with the spring and fall meetings. The board is interested in your perspective as an assistant. It is a great experience, not a lot of time commitment, and a leadership role worthy of including on your resume.



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# My Path to the Beautiful State of Idaho

**Andrew Makuch, The Valley Club,  
Hailey, Idaho**

When I started in the turf industry nine years ago, I would never have guessed the journey it would take me on. I grew up in Reading, Pennsylvania, about 60 miles west of Philadelphia. In my late teens and early twenties, I held many jobs and hated them all — from grocery stores

and steel mills to water bottling plants and hanging drywall. After being unemployed at the age of 23 for a couple months, a friend of mine told me to come work with him at the local public golf course. So, I showed up the following week and immediately fell in love with the job — being outside all day; learning to use all types of equipment. It was a small crew of only three full-time employees and two seasonal guys, so I got thrown right into it and learned how to mow all parts of the course, rake bunkers, and even the theory behind setting up a course with the moving of tee markers and cutting cups. I finally felt like I found something I could do for the rest of my life.

I had only spent one season on that

public course when my family decided to move down to Savannah, Georgia. As soon as I got down there, I started applying for golf course work and took a job working at Savannah Quarters Country Club. This was a much different experience than the one I had in Penn. We had about 20 full-time crew workers under a superintendent and an assistant. Also, down there they have Bermuda grass (who knew there was more than one type?). I now had to learn how to manage Bermuda grass greens with heavy verticutting and topdressing, something I'd never seen before. This is also where I got to experience my first aerification experience and the joys that it brings — long hard hot days in the Georgia heat and humidity.

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Very quickly my superintendent realized the passion I had for the job and made me an irrigation tech; I became a master at digging holes. A whole other side to the industry I didn't know about. Learning to set irrigation schedules and theories behind how much and when, troubleshooting individual head issues, fixing breaks in main lines and laterals and learning about long days on the golf course. Why does irrigation always break on a Friday afternoon?

After three years at Savannah Quarters, I knew it was time to take the next step and advance my career and I decided to go to Rutgers for their Turf Management Certificate. Through their program, I accepted an internship at Winged Foot Golf Club outside NYC. After I got my certificate in 2020, I stayed at Winged Foot where I would be an assistant in training and get to host a US Open. What a wild year that was with the pandemic. Luckily, we were still able to host it in September rather than in June. Once again, a completely new and different experience than the previous two places I worked at. There were now 50 crew guys and anywhere from ten to fifteen guys either with, or getting, a turf degree. While at Winged Foot I spent most of my time split between a sprayer and a hose. Here I was discovering the new challenges of maintaining a course in the Northeast where disease and insect pressure is very high. There was very seldom a day where some part of the golf course was not being sprayed. There were also long stretches of days pulling hose up and down fairways wilt watching. I then became an assistant after my sec-

ond year there, where I would then learn how to prep greens in the morning and then syringe them multiple times a day till the sun went down. I also got to experience a lot of different projects I'd never thought I would like, including putting in a new sewer line through the course, closing wells that had dried up, assisting a company in the digging of new wells and laying conduit throughout one of the courses to be used for inground sub air systems. I spent four years at Winged Foot where I learned and accomplished a lot, but, it was time for a change and the next step in my journey.

All I knew when deciding to leave Winged Foot was that I wanted to live away from a big city and somewhere out west. This brought me to the beautiful state of Idaho, where I accepted a job at The Valley Club in Hailey. Once again, something new and completely different from my other jobs with its own challenges and new things to learn. My first year out here in the spring of 2023, I realized the challenges the winter would bring. That first winter the course had been under snow since November and was still covered when I arrived in April. While learning how to recover after winter damage, I was also placed in charge along with the other assistants of running the crew and having more control over day-to-day operations, something I've never done before but welcomed the challenge. I have been here for just over a year now. I feel I have grown substantially as a manager and look forward to continuing to grow and learn, and seeing where this journey takes me.



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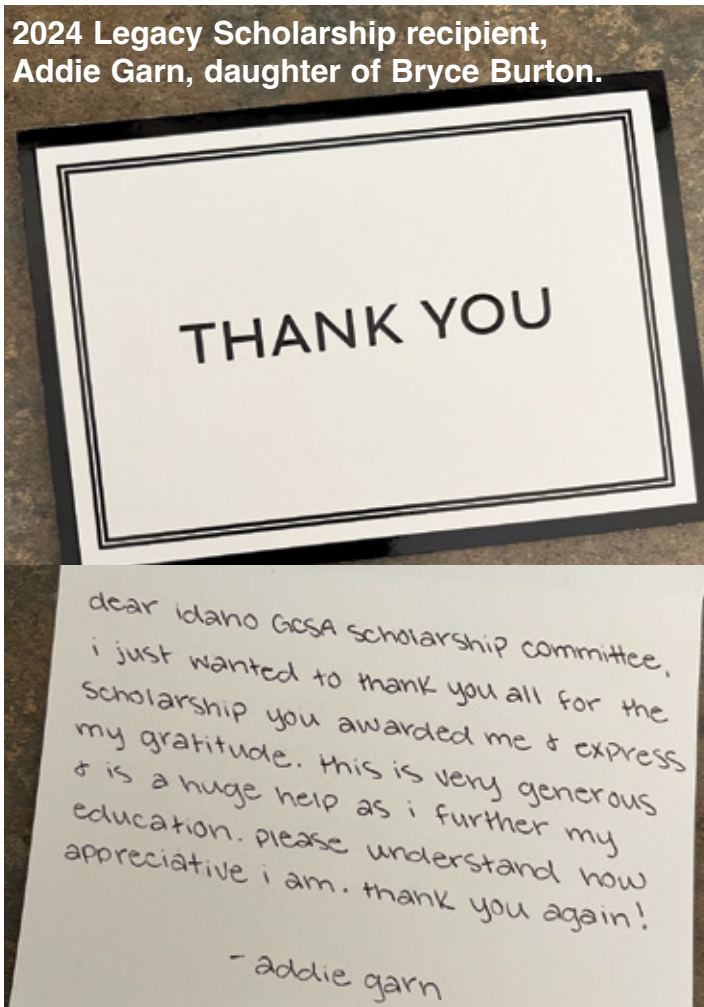
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# A Journey of Adaptation and Connection: Transitioning as a Golf Course Superintendent in Boise, Idaho



Matthew Gourlay, CGCS, MG, AGS  
Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho

Stepping into the role of golf course superintendent at Hillcrest Country Club in Boise, Idaho, has been a thrilling adventure over the past couple months. From the familiar plains of Kansas to the breathtaking landscapes of Idaho, this journey has been marked by excitement, challenges, and profound growth. Embracing new terrain and fostering meaningful connections has defined this transformative experience.

Navigating Boise's unique climate and topography has been a captivating journey of adaptation and education. Each day presents an opportunity to refine turf management techniques tailored to our surroundings and elevate the aesthetics and playability of our course. Transitioning from the flat expanses of Kansas to Idaho's rolling hills demands meticulous attention to detail and a relentless pursuit of excellence, guiding our commitment to delivering a premier golfing experience at Hillcrest Country Club.

A notable highlight has been the honor of preparing Hillcrest Country Club to host the prestigious Albertsons Boise Open (August 22-25). This esteemed event on the Korn Ferry Tour celebrates professional golf and showcases Boise's talent and beauty. Playing a part in this event underscores our team's dedication to excellence in every facet of course management.

Joining the Idaho GCSA has been a significant step in integrating into the turf community. Engaging with fellow professionals through the Idaho GCSA has provided invaluable networking opportunities, allowing for the exchange of ideas and best practices. The support and camaraderie within the Idaho GCSA have further enriched my journey as a golf course superintendent in Boise.

Amidst the excitement of this transition, my family faced a profound loss with the passing of my father-in-law, just five weeks after my wife's arrival in Boise in mid-February. Living merely seven houses away from him in Kansas, his sudden departure left a void in our lives, reminding us of the fragility of time and the importance of cherishing every moment with loved ones.

Furthermore, the decision to uproot our family halfway across the country presented its own set of challenges. Moving to a state and town where we have no existing connections, and our closest family is over 1,200 miles away, has tested the bonds between my wife and me. The adjustment to unfamiliar surroundings, coupled with the absence of a support network, required resilience, patience, and open communication as we

navigated this new chapter together.

With over 20 years as a member of the GCSAA, my journey in the golf industry began with formative experiences at renowned establishments such as Cypress Point Club and Oakland Hills Country Club, where I refined my skills in turf management and course maintenance. Subsequently, my tenure with the USGA and Summerlea Golf & Country Club further solidified my expertise and commitment to excellence in golf course operations. I spent the last 17 years as the golf course superintendent at Colbert Hills Golf Course in Kansas. Throughout my career, I've been recognized for my innovative approaches to course management, environmental stewardship initiatives, and dedication to providing exceptional playing conditions for golfers of all levels.

This journey underscores the profound impact of community and collaboration on our shared goals. Boise's warmth and hospitality have facilitated a seamless transition, fostering a sense of belonging at Hillcrest Country Club. From fellow golf enthusiasts to industry professionals, every interaction reinforces the spirit of camaraderie that defines our community.

In closing, I express gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the golf course superintendent at Hillcrest Country Club and be part of Idaho GCSA. As we prepare for the Albertsons Boise Open and embark on the next chapter of our journey, I am eager to continue building upon Hillcrest's legacy of excellence and creating unforgettable experiences for golfers and volunteers alike.

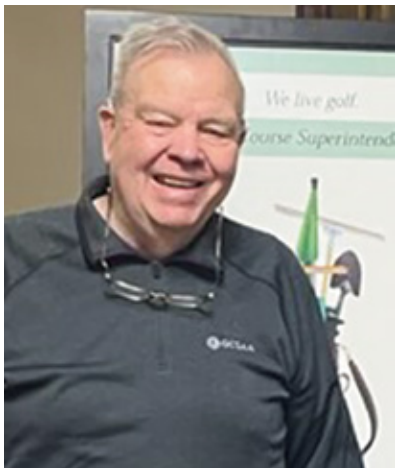


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# Communication Skills

Gary Grigg, CGCS, MG

Increasingly, in contemporary job postings, I notice that employers emphasize the importance of possessing strong communication skills among their desired qualifications for prospective hires.

Communication skills are abilities you use when giving and receiving different kinds of information. These skills should be a regular part of your day-to-day work life, regardless of your job, whether you are a golf course superintendent, a key supervisor on the staff, or in sales and support. Communicating clearly, effectively, and efficiently is an extraordinarily critical and helpful skill. These skills entail proficiency in listening, speaking, observing, and empathizing. Additionally, recognizing the distinctions among face-to-face, telephonic, and digital communication modes such as email and social media can be advantageous. I believed I had reasonably good communication skills when I began as a golf course superintendent. However, as I progressed, I realized the necessity to reassess my abilities and understand the genuine demands of the role. Consequently, I embarked on a journey of learning and development to enhance my communication skills.

Like many of you, I also had professional mentors and those whom I looked up to as vastly superior to me. I tried to learn from the great communicators around me and actively practiced ways to improve my communication over time. I supported my efforts to achieve various personal and professional goals. In the early days, I attended every communication seminar I could, and as time passed, I enrolled in many one-on-one and online classes as I had the time and money.

In my early days, communication skills involved listening, speaking, observing, and empathizing. It's also helpful to understand the differences between face-to-face and phone communication. In my later years, I had to learn digital communications, like email and social media. I also became proficient at written communication.

The following are some of the things I learned that may help you.

I had to learn how to have tough conversations that produced results. These types of communication were complex for me but necessary. You must clearly communicate, so say what you mean and mean what you say.

I found early in my career that I needed to communicate with each employee individually about their role in my operation. Yes, team meetings are great, but nothing replaces bringing folks into your office or any other entirely private place and having private one-on-one meetings about their role on your team, how they are doing, and how they could improve. I was always honest with them. If you want to see some change in someone's behavior,

sooner or later, you've got to step up to the plate. I always tried not to be very critical of them, but I needed to be honest with the other person. Share the impact. You've got to tell them how their behavior hurts you, the team, the company, the customer, or anything else. Open their eyes.

Conversely, if they are doing great, make sure they know that and why. Do not just do that in an annual review. Do it often. Nothing will replace recognition of them, and they will never forget how they were treated.

Like most others, I found that I lacked listening skills early on. Assess your listening skills or lack of them. *Listen like your job depends upon it. It does.*

One day, an employee told me I talked too much and never listened to him. He was correct, and upon realizing this, I changed my way and worked hard at refraining from the all-too-common practice of hearing a few words and then jumping in with my response. It's a sign that you're not listening and don't care much about the other person's comments. Interruptions seem incredibly tempting when someone comes to you with a problem. We often want to jump right in and give advice.

Could this be said of you also? Do you talk too much and listen too little? Being in a relationship with someone who always wants to talk but never bothers to listen doesn't feel good.

Communication is also essential when dealing with those above and equal to you at your course. And yes, this includes the golf professional. At most golf courses, communication with the golf professional is critical. Most of the time, they understand the feelings of the members and players much more than you do because they hear them constantly.

In my day, communicating with the members was typically putting a piece in the course newsletter or posting something in the locker room or pro shop. Now, many are very good at using social media to correspond with club members or regular players at the course. Social media includes Facebook, X, and all other social media forums.

**Doug Roberts**  
CEO

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# What Does Turfgrass Management Look Like in the Year 2050?

Benton Hodges, Mountain West Turf Technologies

Technology in turfgrass management is not a new conversation, but it certainly is becoming louder in 2024. The recent surge in interest can partly be attributed to growing pressure on resources like labor, water and the general need for more sustainable practices.

Today, superintendents have a whole toolbox of advanced tech at their disposal, and the options are only multiplying. Before we dive into today's tools, and tomorrow's possibilities, it's important to view the complete evolution of technology in turfgrass.

Twenty-five years ago, utilizing portable soil moisture meters was a revolutionary step. The emergence of in-ground soil sensors is supplementing the wide-spread adoption of portable soil sensors like TDRs and POGOs. Options exist now for sensors attached to equipment that can collect data passively while mowing or driving the course.

Less than a decade ago, Cub Cadet debuted the RG3, the robotic greens mower. While ultimately discontinued in 2020, it served as a valuable experiment. This early focus on greens highlighted the potential of robotics, but practical realities like acres covered and labor hours saved have shifted the focus to automating fair-

way and rough maintenance, as well as clubhouse grounds/periphery areas.

Robotic mowers are perhaps the hottest topic in turfgrass technology for the year 2024. The ability to utilize the RTK network for sub-inch accuracy with wireless robotic mowers is one of the main reasons for the jump in usage. Wireless robotic mowing is able to achieve five times the efficiency of boundary wire buried robotic mower options. Wired mowers still have their place, but the increase in wireless efficiency is driving the adoption rate.

GPS spraying is the most well-known use of technology in the golf course world. Early GPS spray systems were able to improve the previous three-boom control method, but there were accuracy issues, clunky mapping, and overall early adoption hiccups. However, these early advancements paved the way for the sophisticated GPS spray solutions we see today.

All major spray companies now offer their own GPS spray system, and retrofit GPS kits utilizing agriculture technology are becoming more popular. The ability to fit your current sprayer with a GPS system and transfer it to a new sprayer years down the road is a huge benefit of the retrofit kits. The technology is capable of bringing multiple different brands of sprayers onto the same GPS network, communicating with each other.

The use of drones on golf courses is in

its infancy with most uses being for plant health and moisture monitoring. Beyond that application, the ability to produce highly accurate surveys and maps make drones an attractive asset for golf course construction. Native grass weed management via agriculture spray drones is growing in popularity not only on golf courses, but by county and state governments.

Looking forward to 2050 is where things get really exciting. There will be an "ecosystem" of turfgrass technology that utilizes all these different sectors of tech (and more). Daily drone flights combined with in-ground sensors will be able to control the night's irrigation, and prepare the variable rate GPS spray map for tomorrow. These components will all work together to enable the precision turf management that will be needed for golf to exist in the year 2050.

While this might sound like a far-away distant time, or a scene out of the Jetsons gone Caddyshack, it's really not far off. It's understandable to be a little skeptical, and even frightened, of all the technology and the future of turfgrass management in 25 years. Technology should be embraced by superintendents, because it can provide the breathing room needed to keep going with this difficult job.

Steps you take today to incorporate the available technology will set yourself, and your successors up for success for the future.

## Tom's Ten continued from page 19

for our members to enjoy. We have a few punch list items to take care of this spring before we officially open for our members on July 1st. Everyone always asks what I learned the most from building a par 3 course. I learned a lot on this project — to be patient, to listen, and I would say one thing that made it easier on my end was hiring an experienced contractor. Having an experienced contractor is key to being successful and eliminating a lot of the stress that goes along with the decision making. The best part of this experience was getting to know Tom on a professional and personal level. While he was going through his radiation treatments, my family was able to spend a lot of time with him and Laurie, which led to us ultimately becoming close friends; a friendship we truly cherish. If Tom were here today he would be excited to see Tom's Ten and share it with everyone.







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<b>Prophesy® DG</b>	DG Pro®	Propiconazole	100	25 lbs, 40 lbs
<b>Fungicide X</b>	Pulp Carrier	Iprodione	75	40 lbs
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# Ryan Blechta

Spanish Peaks Mountain Club  
Big Sky, Mont.

*The Perfect Lie, May 2024, PPGCSA*

Three years ago, right in the middle of the pandemic, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club (SPMC) was booming like most golf courses with member play and new members joining. We have 519 members at the club with 261 of those being golf members; we will eventually cap our golf members at 395. With the growth of golf memberships and the new Montage hotel on property, we were looking for a location to add an additional 18 holes. Unfortunately, additional space for a full regulation 18-hole course was unavailable, but we knew something was needed to keep up with the desire for golf at our club. One morning, Tom Weiskopf walked into my office, pointed at a property map I had hanging and said, "We should build a par 3 course and that's the perfect location for a 9-hole par 3. Let's go walk it right now, you have time?" Of course, I always had time for our course designer. We loaded up in the cart and off we went to walk the 35 acres he pointed to. Tom knew that section of property better than I and he had walked this area many times with his dog, Spanky. It was heavily wooded with lots of streams and wetlands throughout, not a place I would have ever imagined you could build a golf hole, let alone a par 3. We were walking through the thick timber and it was hard to see anything. But, Tom could see it all. He was in his "visioning mode," telling me about where there could be teeing grounds and green sites when suddenly a black bear popped out 20 feet from us. The bear startled me and as I jumped back, I looked over at Tom thinking he would also be surprised; however, he was calm and just told me, "It's just a year-old black bear, don't worry." Despite his calm demeanor, I was worried. We were in the woods in an area where no one ever walks and we had no bear spray. I immediately radioed my superintendent, Beau, to bring out some bear spray.

If I had to guess, I would say I walked this area with Tom about 12 times before we broke ground in 2021. It was such an

incredible experience walking with Tom and listening to him explain where the teeing grounds and green sites should be placed. It was like he was a bird and could see everything from above, like it was already laid out and cut in, despite it still being heavy timber. Throughout the design and construction phases, Tom brought in Phil Smith of Phil Smith Designs. Phil and Tom have worked together for years on projects and they both think alike. We had worked with Phil previously on some course renovations and will continue to work with him into the future. Before we moved forward with any grassing, Tom and Phil needed to sign off on everything to make sure it was just right.

With all the wetlands and streams, there was a big chunk of this 35 acres we couldn't use. We wanted to make sure we were environmentally sensitive when building this course and were careful not to disturb any wetlands or streams. After three different routings, we ended up finding one that fit the parcel best, eventually installing eight bridges to make it work. We had BMPs in place before construction started and a stormwater permit in place with the DEQ throughout the entire construction process. To make sure the BMPs were working, we had weekly inspections with myself and our environmental team, which was critical in ensuring there were zero impacts to the wetlands and streams.

In the years leading up the par 3 project, we had been doing some renovation projects on the original golf course with the golf construction company, Frontier Golf. We were very impressed with Frontier and the work they did on the original course. We decided to have them bid this project. Because of the complexity of this project, Frontier bid this as a three-year project. They were the main contractor of the three total contractors involved in the construction of the par 3. We had a tree clearing contractor do the initial clearing and a pond expert who built the water feature on hole 9. The project



originally was bid at 5.5 million dollars; however, we will have spent 6.4 million dollars when the course is complete. There were two areas we looked at related to cost savings — a pump station and cart paths. Eventually we ended up connecting the water supply into the original golf course, saving a significant amount of money. The cart paths we eventually determined would work best matching with the original course as poured concrete, so we did not go with a gravel path, which increased the overall cost. With a budget in place, we got the green light to start.

The first step was bringing in a wetland scientist to delineate all wetlands with flagging and creating a map we could utilize with our contractors for planning and avoidance. Once that was complete, we marked all the green and teeing grounds with colored PVC pipe and flagged the clearing limits with neon ribbon. Tom was very sensitive about removing too many trees, so we were careful with our clearing limits. Next, the clearing contractor came onsite and due to the complexity and volume of sensitive areas, spent the first two weeks creating access around streams and wetlands to get their equipment in place for the clearing. Once that was completed, they cleared and chipped all the timber, which was eventually spread out in the native areas.

The entire 2021 season was spent on

design and tree clearing because we wanted to start 2022 with shaping and infrastructure installation. One thing I learned during this process was that everything changes, and usually on the fly. During clearing, Tom would change a hole design or the layout of an approach or green complex. We had to stay in front of the clearing crew with all design changes to ensure the correct trees were removed while maintaining progress. The goal was to create an unbelievable par 3 course with minimal disturbance to the existing landscape. In fact, the cut and fill on this project balanced out — no material was hauled in or out.

In 2020, Tom had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and went through the rigorous treatment process, including Whipple surgery in 2021, while we were in the design and clearing phase. In the early spring of 2022, we were given sad news that Tom's cancer was back and we had only a few months with him. We immediately decided to bring in two shapers for the season to have Tom be as involved and approve as much as he was able. Typically, on a project like this there would be only one shaper. However, with two shapers we were able to get nearly everything shaped by October. Unfortunately, we lost Tom in August of 2022, but he was able to approve all but one hole. Tom was heavily involved in the par 3 until the week leading up to his passing. I was fortunate enough to work with Tom throughout the entire time he was with us and I count it amongst my most memorable experiences in this profession. I believe this project gave him a distraction from his diagnosis and it helped fuel him to see it through. He was so passionate about this course and I am proud we were able to accomplish what he envisioned. That year we were able to get most everything shaped, drainage and irrigation installed, green and tee surrounds top soiled, and all greens constructed to USGA specifications. Additionally, bridges were installed and some cart paths poured and, for a short construction window, we were able to get a lot completed that year. At our elevation the construction season is generally four-five months, but 2022 was even less with an early onset of snow in October.

We started back up in June of 2023, coming off one of the biggest snow years and wettest springs that I have ever experienced. Because of the snowpack and wet weather, we couldn't get out to do any work on the par 3 until late June. It was a busy 2023 season with final shaping, cart path installation, grassing, and native establishment. We sodded the last green in early September and laid the last bluegrass sod in the rough surrounds at the end of September. We were able to mow the greens a few times before spraying our snow mold protection, preparing the course for winter and for the most part all the sod had rooted before we got our first snowfall. The course was ready for winter and we felt good about where we were at.

We dedicated the par 3 course to Tom by calling it "Tom's Ten." All the holes designed were homage to his favorite par 3 holes he had played throughout his career.

**Hole 1** - Re-creation of the original 18th green at Spanish Peaks before we redesigned it in 2020

**Hole 2** - Design concept from the greens at Pinehurst #2 course, perched greens, convex movement

**Hole 3** - Design concept from Merion's #17 green- ridge in front, balls go to back right

**Hole 4** - Design concept from Pebble Beach's #7, the short

downhill par 3

**Hole 5** - Design concept from the Frost Creek's #14 green in Eagle, Colorado

**Hole 6** - Design concept from Loch Lomond's 18th green in Scotland, bunker within a bunker

**Hole 7** - Design concept from the Riviera CC's #6 green with the bunker in the middle of the green

**Hole 8** - Design concept from Royal Troon's #8 called the postage stamp, very small green with bunkers surrounding. Built a sod stacked bunker using ecoturf product.

**Hole 9** - Design concept from Augusta's #16, we built the pond to mimic.

**Hole 10** - Design concept from Pine Valley's #10, deep bunker front right of green. We ended up making the depth of this bunker the height of Tom, 6' 3".

I often am asked, "Why a 10-hole par 3 course instead of a traditional 9-hole course?" The original design was a nine-hole par 3, but during the routing exercises Tom made it a 10-hole routing. When asked why ten holes his answer was, "If we could fit more holes in this parcel we would; I want to give them as much golf as we can see fit." So, we ended up with ten holes and a practice putting green.

All greens were built to USGA specification, tees were sand capped to four inches and all other turfed areas were capped with four inches of topsoil. All greens were sodded with Dominator Bentgrass, tees and rough were sodded with Dwarf Kentucky Bluegrass. Bunkers were lined with capillary concrete and we used Uniman BB 205 white bunker sand. Native was hydro seeded with a custom Rocky Mountain mix which included wildflowers. The pond on hole nine was a man-made half-acre pond stocked with over 1,000 native Westslope Cutthroat trout (our state fish for MT). We created a separate cart path to the pond so our members can safely access the pond for fly-fishing and not disturb the golf course.

Before Tom passed, he gave us an old log stack cabin that he once had on one of his properties, with the intention we could use it someday at the course. It had been stored for over ten years in Bozeman and was in rough shape. I really wanted to include this in the par 3 course, so I was determined to get it put back together to see how we could incorporate it into the layout. Since we had no pictures or drawings of the cabin while it was on his property, I hired a contractor to put it back together so we could get measurements to have an architect draw up plans to make it a comfort station. We were able to start the construction of the cabin in the spring of 2024 and I am excited to have it completed for opening the course in July. The cabin will be filled with Tom's memorabilia that his wife, Laurie, donated to us and will honor Tom and all of his accomplishments as a professional golfer and great person. One of the accomplishments we are excited to celebrate is Tom's posthumous induction to the Golf Hall of Fame. This June he will be inducted and my family and I are excited to be there with Laurie and others to celebrate Tom and his accomplishments in golf.

This was such an exciting project to manage; I would say the highlight of my past three years has been working on this project.

Now, I am just looking forward to getting the course open

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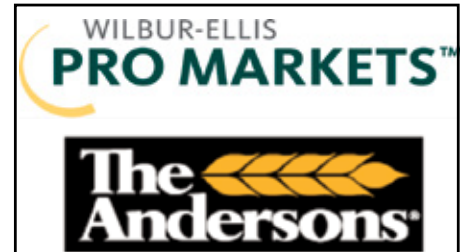
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