

Scholarship/Education Tournaments - 2020

We would like to host these events. We do not yet have dates and locations secured for the Montana and Wyoming Scholarship/Education Golf Events - but we are now looking for sites. We were on hold waiting to see that such events could even be held. With courses open, and in talking to our members, there is interest to proceed with our summer events. Members are saying they want to continue to support golf and our association!

Our scholarship and tournament committees work together to secure a location. If you are interested in hosting the event, please contact either Danny Renz, Douglas Golf Course; Jason Busch, The Powder Horn; or Ryan Blecht, Spanish Peaks.

One Huge Resource

Golf is truly coming together and the results are growing each day - pun intended. GCSAA, CMAA, PGA, USGA and more are sharing information for your entire facility. Information has continually been uploaded. From opening your food and beverage operations to recognizing depression in your team to golf maintenance operations to course set up to sanitizing the various factions at your facility and so much more. Need sample signage? You can find it here. The overview shared on the WeAreGolf website <http://wearegolf.org/back2golf> explains: "As part of an industry-wide collaboration to lead the responsible return of golf in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the game's allied organizations have established "Back2Golf," a plan outlining operational guidelines for the golf's 16,000-plus golf facilities which adhere to nationally established protocols and best practices.

All resources are found by visiting the Back2Golf resource page found on the gcsaa.org homepage.

PPGCSA Events:

PPGCSA Scholarship/Education Summer Outings TBA
PPGCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show October 13-15, 2020, Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Billings, MT
PPGCSA "Almost" Spring Meeting March 1 & 2, 2021, DoubleTree Hotel by Hilton, Billings, MT

Last Call for Membership Directory Updates

Our annual membership directory will be going to print soon.

Please take a moment to review your personal or company profile and make any needed changes by clicking on "your profile" under the members only tab. All changes are made live to the data base, except for email addresses - which must be changed by Lori.

As a reminder, to access the members' only section of our website, you must be logged into the site. *Note...* your user name is the email address the association has on file for you... and if you have forgotten your password, or if you have never set your password, click on "forgot password." You will receive an email (check spam) and just follow the prompts to reset.

Healthcare Programs Now Available in 38 States

As of April 1, GCSAA members in 38 states now have access to quality customized health care options through Association Health Programs.

Product availability, rates, and eligibility vary by state and individual circumstances. States that only allow for their own state-run insurance programs, and/or have certain state limitations, do not allow outside parties to offer options within the state.

If you are insured through an employer's group policy, you will typically need to wait until the group's open enrollment period to make a change. AHP recommends you inquire one month prior to the group's open enrollment. For more information visit gcsaa.org.

Rounds4Research Auction

Your support is appreciated! While the auction is postponed, we can still collect rounds. To complete the online donation form, please visit <http://www.eifg.org/research/rounds-4-research/donate-a-round/online-form>. The form is fairly self-explanatory, but if you have any issues, please contact our committee chairs Ryan Blechta for Montana or Jason Busch for Wyoming.



*“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course
Superintendents Association is
dedicated to furthering the education
of our members for the betterment of
golf and its environment.”*

Inside this issue

President's Message	page 3
Past President's Message	page 4
Step Away From the Edge	page 4
I Just Wanted to Learn	page 13
While We Cope	page 16
Not a Good Way to Start Day	page 17

Advertisers index

Floratine Northwest	page 3
Midland Implement	page 4, 10, 20
Wilbur-Ellis/The Andersons	page 5
DBC Irrigation Supply	page 6
Pete Morris Solutions	page 6
John Deere	page 7 & 15
Magic Valley Bentgrass Sod	page 8
Superior Tech Products	page 8
Growth Products	page 11
Tom Roe & Sons.	page 12
Amvac Environmental Products	page 12
Compression Leasing Services	page 12
Granite Peak Pump Service	page 12
Johnson Distributing	page 13
GPS As-Builts	page 14
2M Company	page 15
Baer Design Services	page 16
Masek Golf Cars	page 16
Steiner Thuesen PLLC	page 17
Planet Turf	page 18
Desert Green Turf	page 19
Rain Bird	page 19
Simplot Partners	page 19

Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association

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Vice President: **Mike Kitchen**, CGCS, Teton Pines Resort & Country Club, Jackson, Wyo., 307/732-4146 (S) mikek@teton-pines.com
Secretary/Treasurer: **Rick Hathaway**, Rick Hathaway, Rock Creek Cattle Company, Deer Lodge, Mont. 406/846-1446 (S) or 406/560-8371 (C) rhathaway@rockcreekcattlecompany.com

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Ryan Blechta, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, Big Sky, Mont., 406/ 539-4405 (C) rblechta@spanishpeaksmountain-club.com
Mike Combs, Buffalo Hill Golf Course, Kalispell, Mont. 360/949-0979 (C) golfsuper@me.com
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PEAKS & PRAIRIES GCSA OFFICE

Lori Russell, Executive Director
P.O. Box 807, Lolo, MT 59847 ppgcsa.org
Phone: 406/273-0791 ppgcsa@ppgcsa.org

President's Message

Driving Decisions

Jason Lamb, Sidney Country Club, Sidney, Mont.



COVID, COVID, where for art thou, COVID? Those are words I would love to utter, but unfortunately, I know exactly where COVID is

located. It seems to be all around us and driving every decision being made in all aspects of our daily lives. Hopefully, we are all finding ways to deal with this ordeal. It seems GCSAA, Lori, MSGA and WSGA have been staying on top of keeping us all on the straight and narrow as far as complying with the guidelines. If you are like me, the extra hoops to jump through are worth it to keep golf courses open for our customers. The re-training of employees to the “new normal” should maybe be a refresher of the way we should be doing some things and perhaps, and I say perhaps, is a little overkill in some other things. But, in the end, I feel it is better to err on the side of caution. Also, if you are like me, I am finding it harder than anything else to get the golfers to comply with the new standards. Now, don’t get me wrong, I have some very good members, for the most part. There are the ones who ask if they can carry a bunker rake around in their bags. So, “Yeah, sure, I can pull some of those out of storage and sanitize them for your use. Just give them back when the restrictions have been lifted.” But, I also have those who think the one golfer per cart rule only applies when management is around, and as soon as they are out of eyesight, can jump back into the cart until they see my cart again. Sometimes, it takes every ounce of restraint

to be the professional I am supposed to be and explain for the fourth time, “I am sorry if this is an inconvenience to you; we are trying to follow the guidelines set before us.”

My hope for this entire situation is this: We as an industry and society come away with ideas of what truly is important – a clearer understanding of what it means to be an American, human and friend. I would hope that we can focus on the good and great things in our everyday lives and leave the rest for the worms to turn into the fertilizer it is.

Since reading/writing bad poetry is something I enjoy, and I did not hear any complaints from the last one (possibly because Lori filters all the complaints), here is something else I wrote for your dread or enjoyment.

“To the Gods of the Greens and Tees”

To the Gods of the Greens and Tees, I raise a glass.
I praise your wonder and fields of grass.
You allow us to enter, with ball and club in hand.
We beat and trample you, yet ever green you stand.
Some days you are kind, and allow our shot to be straight.
Our ball finds the cup, and pars or birdies we make.
On other days we do anger thee, and on the course we feel your power.
Trees and rough and water, there to make us cower.
If this shot should fall, my partner’s money I take.
And with your loving touch, my ball begins to break.
It zigs and zags and rolls up to the cup’s edge.
But there it stays, it never falls, I should have used the wedge!
So to the Gods of the Greens and Tees, this I do decree.
Some days I get the best of you, but mostly, you get the best of me.

As always, I hope these thoughts have not lowered your IQ too much or lowered your opinion of me. So until next issue, may your grass be green and your irrigation leaks be few.

Editor's note - Using this picture of our president we are putting in a plug for R4R, even though postponed. You can still donate rounds to Rounds4Research

How to Step Away from the Edge

Based on presentation by John Ross, MG

Karl Hansell. Communications executive at BIGGA Ltd and editor of Greenkeeper International. BIGGA, Northumbria University, York, United Kingdom (as shared by Sean Sullivan, CGCS)

There's no doubt about it, greenkeeping is a stressful profession.

In greenkeeping we often talk about turf being under stress. Stressed plants have an adverse reaction to a set of circumstances and we're very good at managing that. Human stress is exactly the same, but we're less skilled at managing it.

When we talk about human stress, we're talking about a psychological state of tension.

Ancient humans were hunter gatherers and we're all still carrying in our brain the genetic message from our forefathers two million years ago. It's in the 'old' brain that instinctive things happen. The old brain is doing all the things you do instinctively such as breathing, heartbeat and temperature control.

The old brain can process seven million bits of information a second, while the new, civilized brain can only process about 6,000.

I have chickens at home and if I want to see an old brain at work, I just lay a hose on the floor. They've never seen a snake, but it scares them. We're all hardwired through our old brain to have instinctive reactions to threats and dangers.

The first thing that happens is your heart rate increases. You breathe faster and you turn off your digestive system. You don't need your immunogenic system for fight or flight and so you stop producing white blood cells, making you more susceptible to disease in the long term.

The problem we have is we live in a modern world. It's chaotic and there's pressure and your brain identifies those as threats and dangers, so your response is your ancient brain at work deciding whether to fight or flight. But these days it's constant. Two hundred thousand years ago you would run away

continued page 6

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and find a place of sanctuary, but you can't do that at work. There's a drip, drip, drip of constant pressure and we can't get away from it.

There are six work-based stressors. They are: demands of the job; control over the working day; leadership and support; relationships; roles; and change. They're stressors because they threaten your ability to earn a livelihood and keep a roof over the family's head. Your response to them is the same as it would have been 200,000 years ago and that's why stress makes people ill.

How can we recognize stress in ourselves or other people?

Despite it being a mental strain, many of the symptoms are physical. There's high blood pressure, a high heartbeat, adverse cholesterol and the person can be too fat or thin due to comfort eating or avoiding food. They may increase their smoking habit or indulge in escapist drinking. You may notice they are angry more at work or have reduced aspirations and don't seem to care anymore. They may self-harm or have low self-esteem.

Someone can be depressed, difficult to communicate with: they may have anxiety or be neurotic and unpredictable. Perhaps they exhibit type A behaviour and they're over competitive - they have to win and are always right. Their gift to you is they pass on their stress. How many times do we do things as course managers just to shut people up? That's a sign of stress.

Stress is a natural reaction but when it comes to work, you learn to tolerate it to the detriment of your own health. So how can we cope with it and stop that old brain overwhelming how we live our life?

There are strategies for coping and they are about taking control of your situation. Not everyone is capable of doing that and not every workplace is set up to do that.

The first potential solution is problem-orientated, where you

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deal with it at the source. The workplace needs to be set up to support those feeling stress and in many ways your employer has a legal duty to do that. Stress is a work-based hazard and there have been cases where stress has been identified as a source of illness and employees have won settlements.

So how should management work to reduce the six work-based stressors?

1. Demands

We've all struggled to cope with work demands. This relates to workload, planning and problems. If the workload is the problem, look at resources, numbers and skill levels. If you haven't got the resources to deliver the product they want, you can't deliver it and it's unfair for that to be passed on to you.

When it comes to planning, management should consider what works. What are you doing well? Where can we improve and where can we prioritize? It's amazing when you see a real management hierarchy in place. These questions are answered automatically and that de-stresses employees.

In golf we're really good at expecting the best, but what resources can deliver is below that, which is referred to as the 'expectation deficit'. The key to that is to promise low and deliver high. Don't promise the earth.

I'm of the opinion that when we get our courses in incredible condition for a spring tournament, we're shooting ourselves in the foot. We all do it, instead of just saying 'this is what the course looks like' and preparing it to a sustainable level. There's no point really pushing for two days a year, because all you do is disappoint your members for the rest of the year. We like doing it because we like to show that we can, but that just disappoints the members because "you don't do it all the time."

2. Control

Do you have control over your job? Some of you will have and others won't. Some of you will have a general manager who likes to think he's an agronomist. The management standard on that for a well-run business is: empowerment, trust in people and give people responsibility. A manager should guide the business in a direction, rather

continued page 8



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than tell people who are qualified how to do their job. Are you empowered? Lack of empowerment is a stressor. Does the business have meetings and listen to people? Is there a two-way dialogue between the employer and employees? Are opinions encouraged? I used to argue with my last deputy. I had so much respect for him and we would argue a lot because I really valued his opinion.

Is there appropriate consultation? When you need help completing a task, have the courage and the honesty to put your hand up and say, "I need help."

Does someone have a path in front of them? If someone is in a dead-end job, it stresses them. If someone is particularly talented and they can't get a promotion, they just leave the industry and we end up with a reduced skill level. Not having a career path forces people away from a career they love, to doing something else.

If people feel unsafe in the workplace, they feel stressed. Do you have a safety committee at work? Are we letting people know that we value them and we're interested in their opinion? When we have that information, do we act on it and provide a safe workplace?

Do managers get to know people? Do you actually get to know your staff? It's a de-stressor because they feel valued. How many times do greenkeepers not get the praise they deserve? A good management standard is that we praise people, we say well done and we acknowledge people for their efforts. And you don't blame people for things that go wrong, particularly accidents. You can't blame someone for something they didn't mean to do.

All these things add up to de-stressing the workplace and making employees feel valued.

3. Support

When a problem arises, does the support structure exist?

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Perhaps machinery is breaking down or you're working with staff who aren't qualified or competent or quite as good as they should be. Is the support there and when you go to someone with a problem, do you get a rational response or do you get type A behaviour?

Do managers have an open-door policy? Can you talk to them at any point and do they make time for you? Do you say that to your staff?

Importantly, is your problem followed through? Is it an exercise in hot air and paper pushing or is it followed through?

4. Relationships

I had some real crap relationships during my time as a course manager. When there's a structure in place for managing relationships, they become much easier. That structure is your employment contract. In the contract, there'll be a complaints and grievance procedure. Does your manager listen when you go to them with a conflict and do they investigate it? Is there a process in place for resolving conflict?

Good employers have conflict resolution written into their staff handbook. It should be embedded in the way the work

continued page 10



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Stress continued from page 8

place runs. Relationships are so important and it goes both ways. It's not just from your employer to you, it's also from you to employer and your subordinates.

Integrity: Is your employer confidential? If you say something to your employer, will that stay with them or go around the clubhouse? Trust is so important.

Parity: Is everyone treated the same? People know when someone is being favoured; they aren't idiots.

Apologies: Does your employer admit when they've made a mistake? Do you admit when you've made a mistake? If you've done something wrong, the best thing you can possibly do is apologize. There was a 30% reduction in the follow up of complaints when people apologized. Does your employer apologize and admit mistakes?

5. Roles

The management standard for de-stressing in the workplace asks whether the role is defined. I've worked with lots of golf clubs where the course manager is the course manager one year and the head greenkeeper the next. By defining the role, we ask whether you know what your duties are and to whom you are accountable. Are you managed respectfully?

Does your golf club lead from the front or do they just put work on you? Do they ensure you have the resources and everything you need to deliver the product they insist you deliver?

er? Are they recognizing when you need additional help? I've no doubt that managing a big tournament is very stressful, but what we know for a fact is there's a recognition that extra help is needed.

Do managers take the flack when it goes wrong or do they pass it down to staff?

6. Change

This is significant in the golf industry because you could have a new greens chairman or captain every year. It's generally accepted that change in the workplace stresses people. When you're in private business, change doesn't happen that often because they need to have a consistent direction and a business plan. But we're in an industry where change can happen every year. We have to accept that's how it is, but things can be put in place to manage that. Communication and keeping people informed is vital.

If you are stressed, what can you do to help yourself? We've looked at the problem-orientated responses, but let's look at the root cause to see if we can help you see beyond the fog of stress.

In the 'old' brain, thoughts create feelings, feelings create behaviour and behaviour influences thoughts. If we can intervene in that triangle by activating our new, 'civilized' brain, we can influence how we react to stressors. If you are able to remove the unreasonable elements from a stressor, you end up with something that's manageable.

The way to success is by turning your brain around and

continued page 12



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changing how you react to stresses in the workplace. Take criticism; we should welcome it. There's nothing wrong with constructive criticism and when you welcome it, you begin to rewire your brain. Explain things in a rational way. Actually listen to what people say, rather than just waiting for your turn to speak.

Thank people when they speak to you and you'd be astonished at what happens next. If someone's criticizing you and you're able to step back and say, "Thank you, I hadn't thought of it that way, I'll go and rethink," they'll have nothing but respect for you. Always remember that they're coming at you from an angle of their own, caused by their own stressors. That angle may not be the same as yours, but they can both be right. If you understand that, you'll be able to find a compromise.

If someone criticizes you, don't get defensive. Ask questions and find out why they feel that way. What would they do about it? You're asking them to expand on their opinion because it's very easy to say, "The greens are crap," but when you ask people what they would do instead, you get them to expand on their point of view and so you learn more.

Keep responses simple and don't tell people things they don't need to know. They don't need to know about soil pH or water conductivity. Speak to people on a level they'll understand and don't baffle them with science because you gain



nothing by that.

Always be positive. Even about criticism. Don't let it get personal. If it gets personal, walk away. It's professionally unacceptable for things to get personal.

We are told that nerve damage is permanent. But in fact, it's now known that your brain is creating neurones all the time. You'll finish reading this with a different brain than the one you started with. You're joining neurons all the time. It's called learning.

When you change how to respond to things, after three months it becomes embedded. That means you're capable of rewiring your brain to how you deal with stress.



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I Just Wanted to Learn

Scott Lennemann

Marias Valley Golf Course, Shelby, Mont.

I grew up with a family full of teachers. My parents and aunts and uncles were mostly

teachers. I was very accustomed to the June-July-August vacation season. Like most young adults, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but those three months off during the summer sounded really good to me! My first year out of high school in 1988, I goofed off in the fall and took a few night classes during the winter quarter at MSU in Bozeman. I didn't really care for going to college, but my folks assured me that if I wasn't going to college they'd do

their best to make me miserable.

During the spring of 1989, a friend of mine asked me if I was interested in leaving my \$4/hr. job at the grocery store for the great outdoors of a golf course to make a whopping \$6/hr. All I knew at the time was that six was more than four and that would absolutely fund my teenage shenanigans. My parents were fine with me making the change but reminded me that school was priority number one!

I started my career in the golf industry in the spring of 1989 as a night irrigator at Riverside Country Club working for Mark Walker. I would work during the day until it came time to water on a nightly basis. Half the course was quick-coupler and the other was automated - but the two couldn't fully operate at the same time. I would go to work at dusk, plug in several greens heads and a few random rough heads, before I could

continued page 14



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Club Car

fire up the pump. Once I was up and running, the race was on. Get the greens first, and then the tees and fairways. As I would transition out of the fairways, I would race around the back side of the course and turn on the automated stuff. There weren't too many rough heads so I would change a set and then race the course to confirm everything was moving along as intended. My EZ-GO golf cart was equipped with course fabricated rack that held all my quick couplers: the 44s, the 55s, the 77s, and the big huge 7s that, if they slipped out of your hands, you would be receiving a quite painful shower.

This went on every day of the week and there were few days off. If it rained during the day or evening, I would get that night off, but would be on a weed eater and a push mower all day the next day. Mark Walker referred to me as weedwhip or pushmow during crew meetings. At the start, I was terrified of Mark. I did not want to get in any trouble and I worked as hard and efficiently as any greenhorn could. During the first summer after a rain event, we had a mainline break and I was ordered to come in and dig it up. Upon strolling into the building I was handed a shovel and told to hop into the cart with the boss. I kept my mouth shut and my shovel moving as we started hunting for the leak. I was sure that I wasn't going to be slacking and kept digging. After several minutes of hard clay digging, Mark sat down on the side of the hole and told me to take five. I kept going! I was promptly pulled down onto my backside and told to sit down for a few minutes. I explained that I had been raised to always work hard and especially in front of the boss. He burst into laughter and told me to relax. "There is always time to laugh. If you're not having fun at work, then what is the point of working?" From that moment on, my respect for Mark Walker changed from one based on fear to one based on wanting to be just like him. We talked

about his education at Michigan State and his construction projects and many other great stories. I wanted to be at work all the time to just learn from Mark. The idea that the fruits of our labor wouldn't be totally evident right then, but as time moved on, was intriguing to me. From grass greening up from a fertilizer app, to the healing process from aerification, to smoother ball roll after topdressing, I just wanted to learn.

My most memorable butt chewing came super early one morning from one super pissed-off Mark Walker. Our aforementioned EZ-GO golf cart had a bad habit of breaking the muffler mount. When it came apart, it would make my nice little utility cart sound like one of those super loud YZ-80s that all my buddies had in junior high. I thought I was one cool cat, racing around the course all night long. I was having a blast ripping around the course with my headlights on and checking things out. At about 4:30 a.m. (the crew started at 6 a.m.) I saw Mark coming up the fairway to visit me. He had blood shot red eyes from lack of sleep and the very biggest amount of Copenhagen any one human could ever put in his mouth! In my adventures that night, I did notice a significantly larger number of lights on in houses around the course. Every one of us know all of those four letter words, but that day, the combination and emphasis at certain points of the one sided conversation confirmed to me that I had royally fouled up and was very lucky to still have a job. It was very impressive and mostly remembered after 30+ years.

We were always encouraged to play other golf courses to see what they did. How were they set up? What did we like or dislike about the property and why? Mark would quiz us and teach us that the factors involved in maintaining a golf course were ever changing and not all of it was in our control. Many of the little lessons I learned as a teenager, I try to teach to the ever changing crews of our day. One of the first things I tell a new hire is that we better be having fun. "There is a time for work and a time for play."

For several years, I kept in contact with Mark and even had the chance to work for him again in the fall of 1995 at Exchange City in Billings. I moved to Las Vegas in the spring of 1998 and would always call and ask for advice or share ideas. As my family grew and I became more confident and engulfed in my life and career, I lost touch with the one man who I truly call a mentor. If it wasn't for Mark Walker, I would have probably stuck with teaching. I received my BS in Secondary Education from MSU in 1994 and have not taught one day of school as a hired teacher. I substitute taught during the winters until I moved to the all year round course work in Las Vegas. My dad was proud of me when I got my first superintendent job, yet disappointed that I was making almost as much as he was, a teacher with over 20 years of experience at the time.

I love our industry and cannot imagine a life without growing, mowing and watering grass. I have worked with some of the most fascinating people, who all have amazing stories of why we get up well before dawn and never stop learning how to make our little piece of green grass better. I am truly blessed that I never feel like I have to go to work. I'm having fun and love sharing that with the people with whom I surround myself. Thank you, Mark Walker!



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While We all Cope, Our Lives Move On

Danny Renz, Douglas Community Golf Course
Douglas, Wyo.



First of all, I hope everyone is staying healthy, still working, and are able to actually go do their job. Who would have thought just a week or so after our spring meeting that our whole world would fall apart? If you would have told me this was ever going to happen, I would have said, "No way in hell." At least not in the state with the smallest population. I just hope and pray that this is over sooner than later so people can safely get their lives back together.

At our course, we were able to open once the weather finally permitted, but

it's just not the same. It's hard to know what's going to happen and how long this is going to last when the so-called "experts" don't really know. People are worried about joining because of the uncertainty. The encouraging part is golf is about the only thing to do so when it's nice out; we have been much busier than normal at this time of year. We have been taking all the precautions we can think of to both sanitize and keep the social distancing, but it's pretty hard to think of everything when you still have to do everything else you normally do. This is probably the case for any business still open. We're not at all a hot spot, but of course, we don't want to become one or have someone get it from our location. I feel this is going to get better soon. For the most part, people have done what they've been asked and the curve is flattening with numbers much lower than once expected. I realize there are some people more worried about this than others. but I believe it's all going to be okay, soon.

Along with the concerns of our golf course and our economy, we are expecting another boy May 18. As of right now, I can still be in with my wife as our son is born, but I'm the only one and I can't leave. If I do, then I can't go back, which is tough when we have three other kids. My parents were going to come from South Dakota to help watch them,

but they're in their late 60s and 70s, so they are staying put. We'll figure out a way that works. That's how superintendent families operate. I'm just thankful for many reasons right now and that I do live here. I couldn't imagine living in a more populated area and having my first child where I couldn't be a part of the birth. Or even worse, have something go wrong and you can't be there for your wife or possibly ever meet your child. Scary things to think about, but, these unprecedented times can make you think of a lot of things you'd rather not ever have to think about.

On a little less serious note, I don't know how much longer I can personally go without sports or golf league, but the best we can do is keep our heads up. Try not to let the fear and hysteria created affect you or your family. Obviously, we need to be smart about the choices we make, but let's be confident and get our economy and lives back as quickly as allowed. If you or your family need help, let us know. I know there are different avenues to take to help during these troubled times through GCSAA, and I'm sure people in the association can lend a hand, also.

Everyone stay safe, stay positive, take care of yourselves, and let's pray for better times.



Greg Baer

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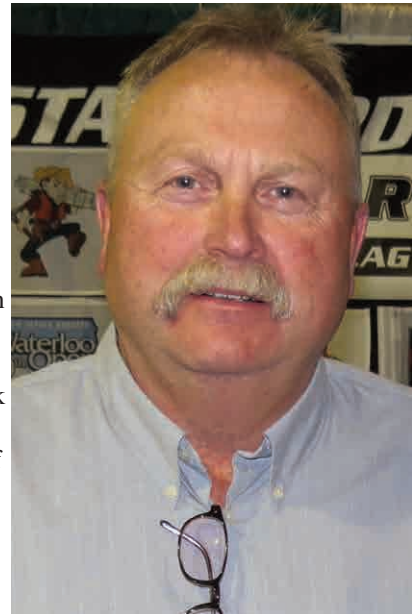
Superintendents are in a league of their own. I'm always impressed with the individuals of this elite membership. There just isn't an occupation that is filled with more dedicated and conscientious professionals. They are usually the first ones at the course in the morning and the last ones to head home. Many don't take a day off throughout the season. A majority put in more hours in a golf season than most people work in twelve months.

Each course has the usual expected challenges. Mother Nature throws the best she can at us - everything from flooding, damaging wind storms, unseasonal snow storms, ice storms, hail storms, heavy frost, to unbearable heat waves and drought spells, just to name a few. Then there are others who have unique problems. I'm always surprised to hear of the many problems that I didn't know existed, from damage and or nuisance from moles, voles, wild hogs, armadillos, opossums, snakes, alligators, iguanas, and even Nile monitors. Glacier View has all the common 'northern' problems of muskrats,

foxes, coyotes, Columbian ground squirrels, raccoons, skunks, occasional moose, always some black bears, loose horses, a rare grizzly bear, and plenty of deer.

But the biggest and most problem animal our course deals with is the Rocky Mountain Elk. For about a month and a half period in the spring and for two and half months in the fall, the elk can't resist the lush feed on the course. If they just foraged in the rough and fairways it wouldn't be so bad. They do have duels on the fairways, though. Each fall during the rut, those duels will do damage that looks similar to what a garden rototiller would do in a

continued page 18



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Continued from page 17

twenty foot circle. During some wet rainy periods, if they break into a run, they can sink into the soil three to five inches with every footstep in the fairways.

Our course borders Glacier National Park, separated only by the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. After dark, the elk swim across the river out of the park, enjoy the course for the night, then cross back over the river before morning light. This is a routine that has been passed down for generations. Every year there are several different bunches (harems). Depending on the size of each bull, his harem can number from six, twelve, two dozen to even over fifty head. Increasing the challenge is the fact that you can chase one bunch from the course, only to have a different group arrive later that same night. The only break we get is that they don't like the irrigation system when in operation. This is what stops their nightly routine in the spring. Of course, it has to be in full night time operation to be effective. Usually around the end of August, we are able to back off on irrigation due to frost or rain. Predictably, within two nights of not irrigating, the elk return.

The most disheartening thing is that they like to bunch up and hang out on the greens. We pull the flag poles each night. This prevents the elk from breaking the poles or pushing on them until the cup is forced out sideways. Many mornings our





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four or five person maintenance crew will spend from four to ten hours repairing damage from the previous night. To repair the damage, you have to work around each hoof print with a hand fork tool and pull the sod up to bring it back to the level surface of the green. Of course, these repairs have to be done before mowing. Each track can be sunk down from a half an inch to three inches. This all depends on the moisture in the soil and if the elk start horsing around while on the green. We have



spent up to 16 man hours repairing one green. One night I came down to check on them and found thirteen head all bunched up on the green. I had previously checked it just two hours before and found nothing. Needless to say, this is not a good way to start the day for any greenskeeper. Our crew does a pretty good job of being mentally prepared for what the start of the morning usually entails. I try to check the course during the night at least once. Many nights I will check up to three times – especially if there is a tournament the next day, due to the fact that on the weekend there will be only two of us to do the repairs. If I find the elk on the course, I will sometimes haze them with a strong laser light. But my twelve gauge shotgun with special wildlife

cracker shells, is the most effective for both hazing them off and probably, more important for my personal anger management. It takes some experience and a lot of luck to not push them into a run across one of the other greens in their frantic run to the river.

I just thought I would give those of you who do not contend with elk something for which to be thankful. I hope all of you have a good, safe and successful season, and that you are able to spend some time with family and friends.

As I write this, we are in the first week of the COVID-19 shut downs and crisis. I pray that all of you, your families and friends, are well now and remain healthy throughout this ordeal. With so many questions and unknowns at this time, none of us are sure what the season is going to involve. As always, I know this team of professionals will somehow contend with all of this and whatever else we have to endure this season, like we do

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