



The Mountain State Greenletter

Volume 13, Issue 9
September 2021

West Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association

Board of Director's Message

Not much further to go now and we will have another season in the books. I hope everyone has made it through with most of their sanity remaining!

Don't forget our annual fall meeting on October 4th at Bridge Haven. We will meet at 11 AM for elections/lunch. For anyone that is unable to attend the meeting, a virtual option will be available as well. Following the meeting, golf should begin at noon. Both the Vendor Cup and the Robert Allman Century Cup will be on the line. It would be a good get-away and a fun time after this long season.

I'm proud to announce that the WVGCSA will be a sponsor for the upcoming WV State High School Championship. This event will take place at Oglebay Resort October 4th through the 6th.

Finally, we are actively seeking speakers for the upcoming 2021 WVGCSA Conference. Please contact Amber if you know of anyone that might be interested.

Robert Cline, CGCS
Guyan Golf & Country Club

**Annual Meeting - Monday, October 4th at
Bridge Haven, Fayetteville**

**Turf Conference is November 2nd at
Lakeview Resort, Morgantown**

Hotel Room Reservations - 304-594-1111 (\$75 pp/night)

WVGCSA New Website: www.wvgcsa.org

I need volunteers for the Superintendent Spotlight!!!



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Making Big Things Happen with Small Numbers

By Elliott Dowling, agronomist, Northeast Region

The labor shortage affecting golf courses, and now permeating nearly every industry, has changed how many courses conduct daily maintenance. Faced with not having enough employees to maintain the course according to expectations, superintendents looked to high school and college students to fill those gaps this year more than many years recently. While those young men and women helped tremendously while they were able, it is time for them to return to school. Consequently, already short-staffed maintenance teams are going to see another (significant) reduction in available labor.

With several months of good golf weather coming, superintendents are still tasked with maintaining the best possible conditions, regardless of external factors like the labor market. Challenging, no doubt, but possible with some changes to how the course is maintained. Some of these changes could require facility buy-in and others can be done without much fanfare:

1. Triplex putting greens and tees if they are currently walk mowed. Many courses could triplex greens and maintain comparable quality with one or two people instead of the four or more people required to walk mow them. The same holds true for tees.
2. Use a mechanical rake for the bunkers if they are currently hand raked. Like triplexing greens and tees, using a mechanical rake for bunkers requires one or two people compared to many more to hand rake them. If you already mechanically rake, do so less often or be more selective if staff time is limited. Send one person out to rake greenside bunkers, or only those that were played from, and leave the rest. This will speed up the process with hardly any impact on playability and get that person onto another job quicker.
3. Prioritize rough mowing. Instead of trying to mow all the rough at once, perhaps make a few laps around fairways, where most balls land, and save the outer rough for weekly mowing only. This maintains good playability in the primary corridor and speeds up the mowing process. I have also seen courses stop mowing intermediate rough and walk paths with a plan to reestablish them next year.
4. Change holes less often. Many courses change holes daily to spread traffic and give players a different experience. With fewer employees, changing holes every other day or skipping certain days with minimal play will save time and the impact on wear and the golf experience should be minimal.
5. Mow fairways in the most efficient pattern possible. Striping fairways is a look some courses like, but it requires extra time. Conversely, mowing in a light-dark pattern, or with the fairway contours, can save time while maintaining good playability.

These are just a few examples from a nearly endless list of ideas to improve efficiency while continuing to maintain the course at an acceptable standard. Yes, there could be visual changes to mowing patterns, rough mowing and detail work but none of them affect playability on the primary surfaces. When staffing is limited, it is important for courses to put ego aside and allow superintendents to manage resources in the way they feel is best for the facility.

Using a triplex to mow greens can save a significant amount of staff time with no discernable impact on playability.



Too Much of a Good Thing

By John Daniels, agronomist, Northeast Region

The summer of 2020 marked a golf resurgence. Long-forgotten golfers dusted off their clubs and droves of beginners decided to pick up the game. Memberships at private clubs swelled to the point where many have reinstated initiation fees and some even have a long waitlist to get in. Not surprisingly, this renewed interest in golf is translating to not only more players but significantly more rounds. This shot in the arm for the industry has been a blessing for many courses that have struggled in recent years.

Increased rounds was not just an isolated event of 2020, the trend has spilled over into 2021. Many golf courses are on pace to match, and in some cases exceed, the enormous amount of play from last year. But when is too much of a good thing a bad thing?

Increases in play are great, but it can also expose weaknesses in your golf course and maintenance operation. Some golf courses are struggling to accommodate the increase in rounds and are seeing negative impacts on course conditions as a result. Tees that are unable to recover from all the divots is a common sight. As are thin and weak turf areas from the added golf cart traffic.

The increase in play has also negatively impacted maintenance operations. Superintendents are struggling to perform necessary agronomic practices like applying sand topdressing because there are no breaks from play. Just keeping up with basic practices like mowing can be difficult.

With so much demand, now is the time to reassess and make changes. Does your course need to expand the amount of tee surface? Do you have enough employees to prepare the course each morning prior to play? Could the maintenance team benefit from more-efficient equipment, such as triplex mowers that can prepare the greens more rapidly? Does the course maintenance team have any time with unfettered access to the golf course so that they can do what they need to without interruptions?

The time issue might be the most important of all, if the course is too busy there are important tasks that simply cannot get done – especially with maintenance teams short-staffed as it is. Full or partial maintenance days are invaluable for the maintenance team. No play until noon on Mondays or Tuesdays is a good approach that many courses use, but with excessive play there might be a need to have an additional one- or two-hour gap later in the week as well. Finally, many private clubs have begun, or are strongly considering, scaling back the number of outside events they host in order to prevent course conditions from becoming worn out for their primary customers – the membership.



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A significant increase in play might require a significant increase in teeing space, especially for heavily used areas like the practice tee.



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WVGCSA Annual Meeting

Monday, October 4
Bridge Haven GC, Fayetteville
Cost: \$30 for lunch and golf
11am - Elections and lunch
Noon - Golf

2021 NOMINATION INFORMATION

Any member may nominate any Class A or SM member of this Association, with their knowledge and acceptance of the nomination for the following office listed below.

Please nominate two Class A or SM members to the positions of Director for the Board and we will vote at the Annual Meeting.

- DirectorAndy Bates, Bridgeport CC _____

- Director _____

- Director _____

- Director _____

Please nominate a Class A or SM member to the position of Vice President for the Board and we will vote at the Virtual Annual Meeting.

- Vice President _____

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