

Commonwealth Crier

News from the Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association

President's Message

I hope this message finds everyone in good health. This will be my final installment of the President's Message Chronicles, and I hope you have enjoyed reading them as much as I have enjoyed composing them. There is a fair amount of material I would like to cover so let me get started.

The VGCSA Board has been busy the past couple of months. The Joe Saylor was, again, a huge success. I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to The Foundry Staff and in particular Scott Mauldin, CGCS, and Hunter Hankley for a fabulous golf course to play. Prior to the event, the Board of Directors met for a relaxing round of golf and fellowship followed by a session in which we brainstormed ideas and looked further into the future of the VGCSA—specifically, its member services and means to reach these goals. The results are posted on the web site (www.vgcsa.org).

Following the Saylor, in November I attended the GCSAA Chapter Delegates meeting in Kansas City. I was asked to assist new Delegates during the orientation process, and what a rewarding experience that was. The outcome of the meeting is posted on our website (www.vgcsa.org) and the GCSAA website. During the Chapter Delegates meeting, the delegates are given the opportunity to meet and speak with the 2010 Slate of Nominees. All candidates are highly qualified and very professional. As we prepare to vote, please contact the GCSAA to make sure your voting status is up to date, so that our voice will be heard.

The first annual Assistants Forum was a huge success! We had a great speaker, Tim Moraghan of Aspire Golf Consulting, who led the meeting and discussed the building blocks for a successful career in golf course



management. I think it is safe to say that the assistants that did attend are looking forward to next year's event, and those who did not are probably going to be there in 2010. I would be remiss if I did not thank the Farmington Country Club staff for hosting us—in particular Scott Kinnan, CGCS, Kevin Fortune and Rob Podleski, for having the golf course in fantastic condition—and Grigg Brothers and the other partners that helped sponsor the event.

Soon it will be time for the 3rd Annual GCSAA Social Event with the MAAGCS and Eastern Shore GCSA (February 10, 2010, in San Diego at the GIS). The event will be a great time to catch up with longtime friends, network with industry peers, and share some great food and drink. I hope you are able to attend the event at the Holiday Inn on the Bay!

During our November Board Meeting, we accomplished several things. The primary goal was to set the 2010 Budget. Again a conservative budget was voted on and approved. Financially the VGCSA is in good shape, and should weather the economic crunch we are in. New officers were elected to serve on the 2010 Board. There will be five new faces out of eleven that comprise the Board of Directors, all of which I am honored to serve with.

As I am nearing the end of this message, I would like to hop on my soap box one last time. This is one of the finest Golf Course Superintendent organizations in the country! There is a need for volunteers and always will be. I am challenging you to look deep inside and ask yourself, "What

can I offer?" The honor to serve the VGCSA members is one of the proudest times in my career. It has been a wonderful learning and growing experience and has afforded me the opportunity to develop lasting relationships within the golf industry on both the state and national levels. To be truthful, it has been with mixed emotions that I compose this message. The incoming Board is comprised of great leaders who will lead this organization with you, the member, in mind during each and every decision made.

Lastly, I would like to thank several folks. My employer, Hermitage Country Club—its management team, the members, John Haley and, of course, my staff, all of which made this venture possible. I also thank David Norman for helping me hone many skills and make this position as painless as possible. Finally, my family, with all the encouragement and support over the years, you made it easy. THANK YOU!!

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our 2009 Partners for all the support. Our Association relies heavily on this support and we, as industry peers, need to support those who support our Association. 2009 Partner Program Participants (all listed on page 10)—THANK YOU FROM THE VGCSA!

All the Best—

Eric D. Spurlock
President
Virginia GCSA
2008–2009



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VGCSA Announces 2009 Award Winners

President's Award for Lifetime Service

Tony G. Montgomery has worked as a golf course superintendent

for over 31 years in southwest Virginia. Born in Mount Airy, North Carolina, he grew up in Carroll County, Virginia,



attending Carroll County High School. Graduating in 1974, he also completed a certificate in auto mechanics.

He was hired by Groundhog Mountain's Olde Mill Golf Course while in high school in 1974. His first position provided education in the operation of the pro shop. Wanting to learn more, he transferred to the maintenance department acquiring knowledge about the equipment and how it worked. Having had this hands-on education and enjoying nature, his career choice became that of golf course superintendent.

Montgomery assumed his first position as golf course superintendent in July 1978, at Groundhog Mountain's Olde Mill Golf Course and married the former Jerri Lynch that same year. In addition to continuing education classes at Virginia Tech, Montgomery credits his "real life, hands-on" education to his mentors, Dr. Dave Chalmers, Dr. Jack Hall, and the late John Shoulders.

Montgomery has been a member of VGCSA since its inception, and he has also been a member of the GCSAA for over 25 years. He was employed at Olde Mill for 16 years and has been superintendent at Draper Valley Golf Club for the past 18 years.

Montgomery was active in the Hillsville Jaycees for 10 years, holding the offices of president and vice president in the local chapter, and the office of district director in the Virginia Jaycees. He was awarded a lifetime membership in the Virginia Jaycees in 1987.

He presently holds the title of photographer for the Virginia Turf Council. He served as external vice president, president, and director in the Virginia Turfgrass Association for several terms over a span of 12 years.

"I feel honored to be a part of this organization," Montgomery said. "It has fostered my own personal growth and education as well as allowing me the opportunity to advance the profession of the

golf course superintendent.

"I appreciate the recognition from my peers and the opportunities I have had to meet and work with so many exceptional individuals in this profession. I am honored to receive this award.

"Being a golf course superintendent requires education, hard work, and the ability to work with a lot of different people and different personalities from pros to guys working the carts. The goal is to have the best golf course you can have within the budget of the facility while being prepared to take and deal with whatever mother nature hands out, whether it be drought or flood."

Tony and Jerri have one daughter, Patty, three grandchildren, Amber, Taylor, and Will, and one great-grandson, Braydon. Their home is in Draper, Virginia.

Distinguished Service Award

Cutler Robinson of Bayville GC in Virginia Beach is the recipient of the 2009 VGCSA Distinguished Service Award.

CGCS certified since 1990, Robinson holds both a master's degree in Plant Physiology/Pathology/Weed Science and a bachelor's degree in Forestry and Wildlife from Virginia Tech.



Prior to joining the staff at Bayville Golf Club, Robinson was superintendent at Bassett CC (1982-1985), Oceana GC (1985-1986) and Elizabeth Manor G&CC (1986 - 1995).

Residing in Hampton, Robinson has been married to Elizabeth since 1987, and has

two daughters—Cameron and Meredith.

"Being a golf course superintendent is a truly honorable profession that engages diverse disciplines and requires humility, commitment and perseverance," said Robinson. "The VGCSA is a reflection of those principles!

"[Receiving] recognition by your peers is the high water mark of awards. It is an honor to have efforts that promote our profession be acknowledged by those who know how demanding our profession is."

Robinson sums up his key to success as, "commit each days efforts with the vigor and dedication that I'd expect of others."

2009 VGCSA Scholarship Recipient

Bradley S. Perkins was born and raised in Dundas,

Virginia and is attending Virginia Tech's two-year Turf Management/Landscape Program, specializing in golf course management.



He has been working on golf courses since he was 14 years old, and has worked at Lunenburg Country Club in Kenbridge since 2001, where he is being mentored by Robert Crutchfield in management of the club.

"This scholarship means so much to me because it will help me afford the raising costs of school and my education," said Perkins. "My plans are to graduate from college and take the knowledge and experience I have gained and become a golf course superintendent somewhere in Virginia."



2009 VGCSA Award Winners (L-R) Cutler Robinson, Tony Montgomery and Bradley Perkins with 2010 VGCSA President Jeff Berg

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up•time (noun) { úp-tīm }

1. *the time during which a machine or equipment is operating or ready for use*



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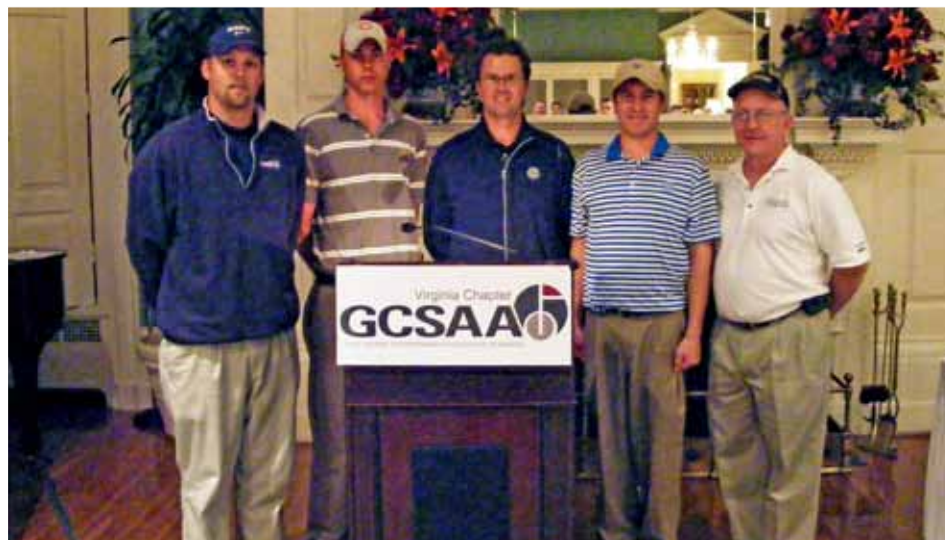


Assistants Forum a Big Success

The first-ever VGCSA Assistants Forum was held on Nov. 9, 2009, at Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville. It proved to be a tremendous success with 77 in attendance to hear counsel from Tim Moraghan, participate in a roundtable discussion, network with colleagues and play in a golf event at one of Virginia's most historic and superb courses.

VGCSA Assistant Superintendent Committee Chair John Libassi worked to stage the event with host superintendent Scott Kinnan. Acclaimed consultant Tim Moraghan of Aspire Golf (formerly USGA Championship Agronomist) spoke on "Building Blocks for a Successful Career." It was straight talk, noting current real challenges to the profession, particularly relating to the current economic climate.

There was no "sugar coating," and Moraghan advised assistants of the competitive landscape and the measures necessary to get in position to move up, when the opportunity presents itself. Presenting sponsor Charlie Fultz of Grigg Brothers echoed the message in his opening remarks, and the consensus of the attendees was that the presentation was quite valuable.



Winners: (L-R) Runners Up Matt Sobotka & Kevin Karkiewicz; Champs Kevin Fortune & Rob Podleski; Open Champions Lester Craig (partner David Callahan not pictured)

Subsequently GWGCSA President Mike Mueller led a panel discussion on key topics, also encouraging audience participation. Other panelists included Moraghan, Scott Kinnan (Farmington CC), Jeff Berg (Goose Creek GC), Eric Spurlock (Hermitage CC) and Andrew McCormick (Hanover CC). McCormick was particularly keen to the challenges faced by assistants, having just moved up to a superintendent position earlier in the year.

After a networking lunch, it was off to play the storied Farmington Country Club, host to the annual Kenridge Invitational and to USGA Championships. Rob Podleski and Kevin Fortune of the host club ran away with the tournament honors, posting a two-man captain's choice score of 65 gross. Then it was time for more networking in a social hour.

Plans are already being discussed for a similar event next year.

Rick Hill and Junior Ruckman Honored with 2009 Lewis Lamp Jr. Achievement Award

The Shenandoah Valley Turf Association awarded the 2009 Lewis Lamp Jr. Achievement Award to Rick Hill and Junior Ruckman at a reception in their honor at Winchester Country Club.

Named after Lewis Lamp Jr., an original founding member of the SVTA, the Achievement Award is given to individuals in recognition of their service and support to the SVTA.

Lamp was one of the original charter members of the SVTA. Without any formal training in turf, he was responsible for the building of an additional nine holes at Winchester CC and became one of the first Superintendents at Winchester. Lamp also was instrumental in the construction of Carpers Valley GC in Winchester and was part-owner in the facility for several

years. Always available for advice, he helped in the construction of several greens at Shenandoah Valley GC in Front Royal and believed in sharing his knowledge. He showed it in his promotion of the turf industry through his training of individuals to become superintendents, such as Bobby Jenkins and others.

The 2009 Award was presented to **Rick Hill** (formerly of John Deere Golf) and **Junior Ruckman** (formerly of Lebanon Turf). They have shown their support of the turf industry in the Mid-Atlantic region and the SVTA through their actions. Always willing to share their expertise in their individual fields, Rick and Junior have been exemplary members of the SVTA. During the reception, many individuals made comments to that effect.

The SVTA is extremely proud to have given the Lewis Lamp Jr. Achievement Award to these individuals and wish them the best in their retirement.



Junior Ruckman (l) and Rick Hill

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Organic Matter Dilution Programs for Sand-Based Putting Greens in Virginia – Progress Report for 2009

Erik Ervin and Adam Nichols, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
 Brandon Horvath, University of Tennessee

Objective: To compare various cultivation approaches that remove from 10 to 27% surface area and determine treatment effects on agronomic performance of a mature putting green in east-central Virginia. The ultimate goal is to determine which organic matter dilution program maintains mat layer organic matter at less than 4% while providing the fewest days of putting quality disruption each year.

Start Date: March 2008
 Project Duration: 2008–2010
 Total Funding: \$9,000

Introduction

USGA Green Section-sponsored research by Carrow's group at the University of Georgia in the 1990's provided Georgia-specific data for cultivation and topdressing recommendations for sand-based greens commonly known as "organic matter dilution" programs.

O'Brien and Hartwiger (Green Section Record, 2003) summarized the details of this approach recommending annual cultivation practices that removed 15 to 20% surface area and incorporated 40 to 50 ft³ sand/M, with the ultimate goal being to maintain surface rootzone organic matter at 4 percent or less.

Aggressive organic matter dilution programs are intended to slow loss of aeration porosity and subsequent infiltration rates thereby allowing superintendents to more easily manage their putting greens and lessen the effects of summer bentgrass decline.

Our research was done on 9-yr old Penn A4 practice putting greens at the Independence Golf Club (Dan Taylor, Superintendent), the home course of the Virginia State Golf Association, near Richmond. Prior to initiation of the study, analysis of four randomly-selected cup cutter cores revealed a thatch/mat layer (~0-2" deep) with 5.8% organic matter and an infiltration rate of 11"/hr.

Various combinations of small tines (0.25" inside diameter (id)), big tines (0.50" id), and verticutting (3 mm blade) were imposed in late March and early September to provide a range of seasonal surface removal from 0% to 26.6% (Table 1).

Verticutter blade spacing was 1", while depth was 0.75"; tine spacing was 1.33" X

Table 1. Treatment Details & Thatch/Mat Organic Matter % at end of Year		Surface Area Removed (%)			Thatch/Mat (%OM)	
#	Treatment Details	March 31	Sept 10	Total	Nov 2008	Nov 2009
1	Untreated	0	0	0	5.2 a	4.3 a
2	0.25" id core, 2 passes; Sp&Fa	5	5	10	4.9 ab	3.4 c
3	Verticut, 3 mm blade; Sp&Fa	11.8	11.8	23.6	5.0 ab	3.9 ab
4	0.25" id + Verticut, 3 mm blade Sp; 0.25" id core, Fa	2.5+11.8	2.5	16.8	5.2 a	3.7 bc
5	0.5" id core Sp; 0.25" id core, 2 passes, Fa	11.8	5	14.8	4.8 b	3.3 cd
6	0.5" id core Sp&Fa	9.8	9.8	19.6	4.8 b	3.0 d
7	0.5" id core Sp; Verticut, 3 mm blade + 0.25" id core, 2 passes, Fa	9.8	5+11.8	26.6	5.1 ab	3.3 cd
				LSD 0.05	0.38	0.42

1.5", with a coring depth of 2". Heavy sand topdressing of approximately 12 ft³ (1200 lbs/M) was applied on both days of cultivation, supplemented by four light topdressings of 0.15 ft³ every 4-6 weeks between cultivations, for a seasonal total of about 24.6 ft³. Cultural management of these greens were identical to all others on the golf course, receiving preventive pesticide applications, daily mowing at 0.125", and January through October fertilization of 2.3 lbs N/M.

Results

Cultivation treatment had no effect on soil temperature, soil moisture, or ball roll distance throughout the 2008 season (data not shown). These data were not measured in 2009.

Our data focus will be on measurements of percent organic matter (%OM from loss on ignition tests) in the thatch/mat layer at the end of each season as affected by the various cultivation treatments and on our estimates (from digital image

analysis) of days required to achieve 99% cover following cultivation. At the end of 2008 only those coring treatments that removed 14.8 to 19.6% (trts 5 and 6) significantly reduced %OM relative to the untreated control (Table 1). Use of smaller tines-alone (trt 2), verticutting-alone (trt 3), or combinations of the two (trt 4), failed to reduce %OM in 2008.

At the end of 2009 all treatments, except verticutting alone, significantly decreased %OM in the thatch/mat layer relative to the control (Table 1). Coring spring and fall with 0.5" id tines on a tight spacing to remove approximately 9.8% surface area to a depth of 2" (trt 5) resulted in the least OM (3%) over the two years. These data imply that verticutting to a depth of 0.75" does not remove enough depth of material for adequate organic matter dilution, even though this procedure removes a large amount of surface area (11.8%) with each pass.

To track percent cover or recovery rate following cultivation treatments in 2009,

Progress Report (cont.)

digital images were taken every 7 to 14 days with a light box and analyzed with SigmaScan software. Linear regression was then used to predict the number of days required for each treated plot to return to 99% cover or a non-disrupted putting surface (Table 2). Fastest spring recovery of 24 days was measured for treatments 2 (small tine coring) and 3 (verticutting). Large diameter coring (trts 5-7) or small diameter coring + verticutting on the same day (trt 4) required 31 to 36 days for spring recovery (Table 2).

Late summer/early fall recovery data were very similar for cultivation treatments that remained the same as their spring counterpart. In particular, treatment 3 (verticutting), recovered in only 21 days (Table 2), while large diameter coring-alone (trt 6) required only two extra days of recovery (38 d vs 36 d), relative to the spring. Fastest early September recovery of 7 days was with treatment 4 where only 2.5% surface removal occurred.

Data interpretation for the remaining treatments (2, 5, and 7) is confounded by unforeseen irregularities in how the treatments were applied. For treatments 2 and 5, when the second 0.25" id coring pass was made, surface tearing and furrowing occurred, causing a higher percent surface damage than the predicted 5%. We are unsure of why this

Table 2. Total estimated days of disrupted putting quality in 2009 as affected by percent surface removal by various core cultivation and verticutting treatments

#	Treatment Details	Spring %		Fall %		Total %	Total
		removal	Days to	removal	Days to		
		March 31	99% cover	Sept 10	99%		Days, 2009
1	Untreated	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
2	0.25" id core, 2 passes; Sp&Fa	5%	24	5%	34*	10%	58*
3	Verticut, 3 mm blade; Sp&Fa	11.8%	24	11.8%	21	23.6%	45
4	0.25" id + Verticut, 3 mm blade Sp; 0.25" id core, Fa	2.5% +11.8%	31	2.5%	7	16.8%	38
5	0.5" id core Sp; 0.25" id core, 2 passes, Fa	9.8%	35	5%	33*	14.8%	88*
6	0.5" id core Sp&Fa	9.8%	36	9.8%	38	19.6%	74
7	0.5" id core Sp; Verticut, 3 mm blade + 0.25" id core, 2 pass, Fa	9.8%	35	5% +11.8%	52**	26.6%	87**

*Two passes with the 0.25" inside diameter (id) tines on Sept 10 resulted in undue tearing, hole overlap, and furrowing on the putting surface that served to delay recovery in treatments 2 and 5 in September; this type of tearing did not happen with treatment 2 in the spring, so recovery was faster.

**Treatment 7 cultivation did not all occur on Sept 10 as verticutting after 0.25" id double-pass coring was causing undue sod lifting/damage. Verticutting was delayed until 26 days after coring, unduly lengthening recovery time to 52 days for this treatment.



Dr. Brandon Horvath pushing cores.



Graden over small tines.



Researchers observe ProCore 0.5 inch tine.



The topdress sand box is demonstrated.

occurred as new tines on a new machine were being used. Our supposition is that undue rootzone wetness and an algae-weakened putting surface caused failure of this double-pass treatment.

As a side-note the summer of 2009 in Virginia was one of record cool temperatures, coupled with above-average rainfall. Extra damage on these two treatments (2 and 5) appeared to extend recovery by an extra 10 days relative to spring recovery times. Interpretation of the recovery time for treatment 7 should be tempered by the fact that verticutting could not be completed over the top of plots that received 2 passes of the 0.25" id tines. Undue sod heaving was occurring so verticutting was delayed until 26 days after coring, greatly extending recovery to 52 days.

Our ultimate goal is to determine cultivation treatments that are sufficient to adequately reduce thatch/mat %OM, while also disrupting putting surface quality for the least amount of time. Therefore we need to examine data in both tables to make some preliminary recommendations or conclusions.

1. The least disruptive treatment in terms of percent removal (trt 2,

10%) healed quickly (24 to 34 days) and reduced thatch/mat OM to an acceptable level of 3.4% after two years.

2. Verticutting-alone each spring and fall (trt 3) resulted in the second fastest recovery of any treatment (21 to 24 days), but failed to significantly reduce OM to a level below the untreated.

3. Treatment 4 resulted in the least amount of days of disruption over the season (38), while also reducing OM to an acceptable 3.7%. The approach for this treatment was to bite the bullet in the spring and complete an aggressive surface removal (small tine coring + verticutting: 14.3%), so as to allow a very minor coring event in September (small tine coring: 2.5%). Total recovery time was 7 days less than verticutting-alone, with a slightly faster rate of OM reduction.

4. Using large tines (0.5" id) at a close spacing both spring and fall each year (19.6% surface removal, trt 6) worked best in terms of final OM at 3.0%, but required approximately

two extra weeks each season for recovery relative to two passes with small tines or verticutting-alone.

5. Finally, being ultra-aggressive by removing 26.6% surface area (trt 7) per year did not work in this trial. Recovery time was significantly delayed, without achieving greater OM dilution relative to treatments that removed 10 to 20% surface area.

In summary, two years of data indicate what most golf course superintendents already know: "there is more than one way to skin a cat": various coring approaches can be mixed and matched with verticutting and consistent sand topdressing to achieve the goal of OM dilution and the accompanying benefit of exceptional putting green performance.

Preliminarily, our data indicate that as little as 10% surface area removal via spring and fall coring may be sufficient for Virginia conditions, while 15 to 20% annual removal should almost always keep you on the safe side.

While verticutting-alone provides fast healing, our data indicate that it needs to be combined with at least one annual coring for adequate results.

Congratulations, Katie & Eric Frazier

Congratulations to Katie and Eric Frazier on the arrival of their first child, a boy, William Palmer Frazier, born on December 16th, 2009. Eric serves as Superintendent of Willow Oaks Country Club. Congratulations from the VGCSA!!

Member Profile: Sean K. Baskette Hidden Valley Country Club

Golf Holes at Facility: 18

Years at Current Club: Just beginning my third year

Years as Superintendent: 9

Number of Years Involved in GCSAA: 12

Favorite Hobbies: Golf, of course, and enjoying free time with my wife and 2 dogs

Favorite Professional Golfer: Growing up it was Jack, but now I can't help but to root for Phil (sorry, Tiger)

Favorite Sports Team: HOKIES all the way—and the Broncos. For baseball I have concluded I will never see a championship with the Cubs

Biggest Role Model as a Professional: Jeff Michel taught me the ropes at Mt. Vernon CC growing up. He urged me to follow the path in turfgrass and also molded me as a manager of people.

How did you get started in the maintenance profession? First job ever was raking bunkers and sprigging fairways at Belle Haven CC. But I got my

real start at Mt. Vernon. This is where I began to realize this was a great career path.

What has been the most rewarding part of being a golf course superintendent? I like seeing the finished product. Long hours become worth it when you see what a little attention to detail will bring. The other rewarding aspect is the friendship you build with all of your fellow partners in the turf industry. Most of my closest friends have been derived from the golf industry.

If you could change anything about the golf course superintendent profession, what would it be? First I thought it would be the long hours, but we tend to do that to ourselves. So I would have to say it's the perception from people outside our world. We all try to be stewards of the land, but unfortunately that falls on deaf ears.

What are some challenges and opportunities that golf course superintendents will face in the next 5-10 years? Water and golfers. Water issues are huge on the west coast and gradually becoming more of an issue in the east. Keeping golfers, not only for the private clubs, but resorts and public facilities as well. The family dynamic is king and people are changing their list of priorities.



Baskette with "Bogey"

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Brown-headed Nuthatch Enhancement Study

Mark Stanback, Davidson College

Objectives:

1. Assess the importance of pine density and competition with eastern bluebirds on the spatial distribution of brown-headed nuthatch nests.
2. Assess the numerical response of brown-headed nuthatches to the experimental exclusion of eastern bluebirds.
3. Assess the ability of eastern bluebirds to usurp nest sites from brown-headed nuthatches.
4. Provide golf course managers in the Southeast with recommendations to increase the numbers of brown-headed nuthatches on their golf courses.

Start Date: 2007

Project Duration: two years

Total Funding: \$7,400

The brown-headed nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*) is a cooperatively breeding bird endemic to the southeastern United States. But for nearly half a century its numbers have been in decline. Habitat degradation is usually blamed. Brown-headed nuthatches are said to be habitat specialists—dependent on old growth pine forests. As development overtakes more of the Southeast, there are fewer old pine stands usable by these birds.

Another cavity-nesting species has increased dramatically in number in the same region—the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). Bluebirds tend to fare well in a variety of human-altered habitats. Moreover, bluebirds have been the beneficiaries of nest box programs throughout their range. We hypothesized that the burgeoning bluebird population in the Southeast is negatively impacting brown-headed nuthatches.

My students and I have been monitoring nest boxes on six golf courses near Davidson, North Carolina since 2001. For each nest box, we measured the distance to the nearest three pine trees (*Pinus echinata*). The distance to the third was our measure of pine density. Boxes for which the third



1.5" entrance holes (left) accommodate both bluebirds and nuthatches; smaller holes (right) exclude the larger bluebirds.

closest pine was less than 50 meters away were considered to be in “pine-rich” habitat; boxes for which the third closest pine was > 50 meters away were considered to be in “pine-poor” habitat.

Standard 1.5" entrance holes accommodate both bluebirds and nuthatches; 1.25" holes accommodate nuthatches, but are too small for bluebirds. We randomly assigned boxes on three golf courses to the 1.25" treatment. Pine density had no significant effect on nesting by nuthatches, contrary to the predictions of the conventional wisdom. Hole size, however, had a highly significant effect on nuthatch settlement: nuthatches settle where competition with bluebirds is minimized, regardless of local pine density.

We recorded the number of nuthatch nests on three courses with a sub-set of 1.25" entrance holes vs. the number on three other courses on which all boxes had standard “bluebird-friendly” 1.5" entrance holes. We monitored boxes in 2004 (prior to the addition of “nuthatch-friendly” holes on our experimental courses) to ensure that all six courses were similar in their lack of nuthatches. For the 2005, 2006, and 2007 breeding season, we monitored the numbers of nuthatch nests on both experimental and control courses. Numbers of nuthatches increased in each year of the study, suggesting that bluebirds competitively exclude nuthatches from available habitat.

These results clearly demonstrate that nuthatches flourish only where bluebirds are excluded. Prior to the 2008 breeding season, we reversed the treatments on our six golf courses: our three “bluebird-friendly” courses became “nuthatch-friendly” and vice-versa. Of the 32 boxes containing nuthatch nests in 2007, 31 contained bluebird nests in 2008. The competitive superiority of bluebirds is unquestionable.



Brown-headed nuthatches breed in cooperative groups in the southeastern US.

Summary Points

- Brown-headed nuthatch numbers have declined throughout the Southeast. Their supposed dependence on old growth pine forests—and susceptibility to habitat alteration—is usually blamed for this decline. We offer an alternative hypothesis—that nest site competition with a burgeoning eastern bluebird population is responsible.
- We monitored nest box use by bluebirds and nuthatches on golf courses and found that pine density had little effect on nest box use by nuthatches. Instead, the exclusion of bluebirds (via smaller entrance holes) was the best predictor of nest box occupation by nuthatches.
- Brown-headed nuthatch numbers increased dramatically on three golf courses where bluebirds were excluded from one-third of nest boxes. Control courses had few, if any, breeding nuthatches over the same period.
- When bluebird-friendly holes were returned to experimental boxes, bluebirds quickly evicted resident nuthatches.
- To prevent monopolization of nest boxes by bluebirds, golf courses in the Southeast should provide smaller entrance holes on a subset of their nest boxes.

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Eligible organizations include:

- Virginia Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Virginia Turfgrass Foundation
- Virginia Turfgrass Council
- Wee Ones Foundation
- and many others



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News from Affiliated Chapters

News from the GWGCSA

As I sit down to write this end of the year newsletter, I reflect on a season that actually was not too bad for a change in this area. A little too much rain early and late, but "less than hateful" temperatures transitioned straight into winter in late December. I've seen a whole lot worse.

I will say that revenue is down and I am tired of shoveling snow, but what will be referred to as the blizzard of 2009 did provide some much needed down time for not only the staff but the golf course and turf in general.

Of note from the golf side, the annual Superintendent-Assistant championship was held at Springfield Country Club in October. A special thanks goes out to the speaker, our one and only Peter McDonough, for his update on BMP's, pending stormwater regulations and nutrient management.

The team of Ray Nash and Garrett Neville successfully defended their title to win the trophy for the second year in a row with the better ball score of 67. The open division was won by the team of Mike Rincon and Ryan Anderson with the score of 66.

SVTA Update

As the winter season continues, I would like to reflect on a trip I took to Indiana this fall. I believe that I saw the past and future of golf course design all in one day. On one side of French Lick is a Donald Ross Course that plays 7,000 yards and a par of 70. This course was opened in 1917 and features typical Ross characteristics. There are forced carries, blind shots, false fronts, collection areas, and of course his famous undulating greens. This course was fun to play, and it has stood the test of time.

The other course is a Pete Dye design that opened last April. It is magnificent with scenic views from every hole; however the course plays to 8,300 yards from the tips with a course rating over 80. If you are wondering if these numbers are correct, yes they are. I believe that

Kudos goes out to Lentz Wheeler, Dick Purple, Casey Straub and the entire staff at Springfield Country Club for a fine event.

We rounded out the season with our Annual Meeting at Evergreen Country Club. As usual, Dave Anderson, CGCS, Mike Brennan and the entire staff must be thanked for yet another great event.

The "pink ball" tournament was won by the team of Mike Mueller, Corey Haney, Mark Kingora and Mike Augustine.

This was an election year and I am pleased to announce the Greater Washington Board of Directors for the 2010 season are as follows:

Mike Mueller, President
Ray Nash, Vice President
Bo Jumbercotta, Secretary/Treasurer
Jeff Van Fleet, External Vice President
Josh Alpaugh, Assistant Superintendent Advisor

Congratulation goes out to the Board for their continued efforts to provide stability and growth to the association. Thanks for stepping up.

Please feel free to contact any of

the board members with thoughts or concerns regarding the Greater Washington or to host an event.



Jeff Van Fleet
GWGCSA
External Vice President

VTA News

Winter hit with an abundance of snow. Our region received 14-24" of snow that remained on the greens for about one month! We will all be watching out for disease outbreaks, if we didn't spray preventatively. This past year has brought an unprecedented amount of rain and extended periods of wetness. It looks as if the weather patterns will continue to bring more moisture our way.

We are all preparing budgets for the 2010 year. With great expectations, not knowing what to expect, we hope for the best! The Board of the VTA will meet in mid February to discuss plans for the 2010 golf season. It is critical to do early planning to keep people informed on ever changing environmental regulations, current hot topics, and new research that could help to reduce budget costs. In today's economy, it is critical to keep networking with our fellow peers.

This industry is truly a sharing, giving community. It has been my pleasure serving as president this past year! I look forward to serving another successful year with great participation!



Kimberly Garnett
2009 VTA President



Edwin Eagle, CGCS
SVTA
External Vice President

News from Affiliated Chapters

TTA News

I hope the holidays treated everyone well. Winter certainly has arrived in Virginia this year. In the Tidewater area, we missed out on the big snowstorm that everyone else received before Christmas. It has been cold and is still wet from all of the fall rains. Keeping even the few hourly employees we have busy has been a challenge. With the economy still sluggish, it's been a good winter to be a bit lean with the labor and not feel that you are falling behind with some winter projects. I am already looking for an early spring!

The TTA had our 2009 Annual Meeting in November at Virginia Beach National. Kudos go to Mark Ross, golf course superintendent for having the course in as good of condition as possible considering all the rain we had received before the event. We had a few foursomes that braved the elements to play a really good, but challenging, golf course.

At the meeting, we selected our 2010 officers. The slate is as follows:

- President:** Rob Wilmans,
Elizabeth Manor G&CC
Vice President: Charlie Womble,
Lambert's Point GC
Secretary/Treasurer: Travis Creech,
Bide-a-Wee GC
1 year Director: Bert Walton,
Turf and Garden
1 year Director: Mark McCaughan,
Herrod Seed
2 year Director: Mark Ross,
Virginia Beach National GC
2 year Director: Mike Schiller,
Nansemond River GC
2 year Director: Mark Steadman,
Broad Bay CC
External VP of VGCSA: Chris Petrelli,
Cedar Point CC

We are excited to have some new faces on the board as they will be the future

leaders of the Association. We will be meeting soon to plan out our event's schedule for 2010 and should have it mostly finished in time for the Spring Newsletter.



Chris Petrelli
TTA External VP
Cedar Point Country Club

News from the ODGCSA

I'd like to begin my first article as the president of the ODGCSA with a big "Thank you" to my predecessor, Scott Kinnan, for guiding me in this new role. I am excited to have the chance to serve alongside he and our other board members, Eric Frazier, Tommy Adams, Scott Mauldin, and Mark Price.

Equally deserving of gratitude is Peter McDonough for his time with us as External VP. Peter is stepping aside to focus on issues vital to all of us in the golf industry. Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Rob Basso, my assistant, for making it easy for me to spend time on board related tasks. Assistant superintendents, as we all know, are often under appreciated and overlooked, but are in fact a huge part of the success of any golf facility.

The wheels are turning full speed in planning what I know will be a fantastic year of ODGCSA gatherings. We aim to have a complete schedule of events published and sent out well before the first event. We are planning stops in all four of the major areas within our association.

Williamsburg, Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Charlottesville will all be home to at least one event on our schedule. We also plan to include a social event to start the season out.

For a variety of obvious reasons, and some not so obvious, we have struggled with attendance for a long time. Many would say that these tough financial times make attending events difficult. I would agree, but argue that in times like this you stand to gain even more by coming. Camaraderie, golf, education, networking, etc. are all valid reasons to attend an event. Most of the benefits of attending are intangible, but I assure you it is nearly impossible to surround yourself with peers in the industry and come away empty. Please be on the lookout for our event schedule and make plans to join us often.



Dave Smith
ODGCSA President
Fawn Lake Country Club

Methyl Bromide Efforts Successful

At a meeting Oct. 29, senior officials of the U.S. EPA assured GCSAA and manufacturers of methyl bromide (MeBr) that the agency would not cancel golf course MeBr use immediately and will work with the product registrants over the next several weeks to determine a phase-out schedule.

Manufacturers had asked for MeBr to be available until the end of 2014 to allow for suitable alternatives to be developed, but the EPA denied that request. It is hoped the agency will now agree to at least a 3-4 year phase-out schedule. But even in a worst-case scenario, it is likely the phase out would be no sooner than the end of 2011.

It is likely that under any phase-out plan, end users would be able to use any packaged material until the supply is exhausted.

GCSAA members wrote letters and made calls to Congress urging their representatives to press the EPA to agree to a reasonable timetable for an orderly methyl bromide cancellation process. Thanks to these grassroots efforts by members, golf facilities will continue to have access to this important soil fumigant tool for the next couple of years.

GCSAA reports indicate that more than 400 messages (e-mails and faxes) were sent to Congress on this issue. This is the power of an organized grassroots effort!

For More Information Contact:

Chava E. McKeel
Senior Manager, Information and
Public Policy, GCSAA
cmmckeel@gcsaa.org

Golf Industry Show Silent Auction Offers Unmatched Value, Opportunities

Bidding is open for the 2010 Golf Industry Show Silent Auction online at auction.golfindustryshow.com, and savings are available on a wide variety of products.

Proceeds from the auction support environmental stewardship, research and education; player development; as well as grants and scholarships to advance the club management industry. Auction funds also provide youth with the opportunity to learn golf and the life values the game represents.

"The Golf Industry Show Silent Auction benefits everyone associated with the golf facility, including golfers," said Teri Harris, senior director of development for The Environmental Institute for Golf and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). "This is a great

opportunity to pick up brand new, high-quality items at a great price, while supporting the industry which we are apart of, thanks to our very generous and committed donors."

The 2010 Golf Industry Show Silent Auction is presented by:

- The Environmental Institute for Golf (philanthropic organization of GCSAA)
- National Golf Course Owners Association Foundation
- American Society of Golf Course Architects
- The Club Foundation (philanthropic organization of CMAA)
- Golf Course Builders Association of America Foundation

The auction is online at **auction.golfindustryshow.com**, so anyone from anywhere can bid on items for the golf course,

as well as for trips, sports memorabilia, wine and spirits, and other unique items. New items are being added daily, and just by registering, participants are automatically entered in a drawing for a free trip to the 2011 Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

The Golf Industry Show is an innovative trade show combining education, networking and solutions for golf course superintendents, owners/operators, general managers, chief operating officers, architects, builders and others in the golf and club management industries.

The 2010 Golf Industry Show takes place Feb. 10-11 at the San Diego Convention Center.

Rounds4Research Fundraising Effort to Benefit Golf in VA

As we kick off the New Year, VGCSA announces its participation in "Rounds4Research," an innovative new program to help fund a much-needed "Best Management Practices" project, planned for administration in partnership with Virginia Tech researchers. The program is in partnership with the Carolinas GCSA, who pioneered it last year.

Enclosed with this mailing is a letter detailing the program, which centers on an



online public auction of donated tee times under the web banner Rounds4Research.com. Your facility's gift of at least one foursome with carts will provide critical support to this critical project. The beauty of this program is that it gives all facilities a chance to lend "no cost" support, and ultimately lets golfers "pay"

for the science they benefit so much from. The first Rounds4Research.com auction in the Carolinas last year raised more than \$55,000 for turfgrass research in that region.

This year's auction runs from April 7 to April 21. The enclosed letter to superintendents has a donation form printed on the back, and we urge you to secure your facility's support as soon as possible. For more information, visit www.vgcsa.org or www.Rounds4Research.com.

VA Superintendent Selected for Syngenta Institute

Congratulations to Christian Sain, golf course superintendent at The Country Club of Virginia in Richmond, who was one of 25 golf course superintendents from across the country to participate in the Syngenta Business Institute held Nov. 30-Dec. 3 in Winston-Salem, N.C. The Syngenta Business Institute is a unique, educational program sponsored by Syngenta in conjunction with Wake Forest University's graduate school of business.

The role of the golf course superintendent involves not only agronomic but also business manager responsibilities. Syngenta worked with Wake Forest to develop a program that focused on business management in the areas of financial management, leadership and effective communications, and negotiation skills.

Christian was selected from a talented pool of superintendents based on an application process that reviewed their educational background, industry achievements and an essay.

Carolinas GCSA Recognized for Government Relations

The Carolinas GCSA, representing approximately 1,800 members in North and South Carolina, is receiving an EGR Advocacy Award. The chapter's government relations program has achieved success on behalf of golf course superintendents and the wider golf industry in the region. The Carolinas GCSA led a 2007 delegation to Raleigh for the first North Carolina Golf Day, delivering key messages about golf's positive economic, environmental and social benefits, and presenting findings from the North Carolina Golf Economic Impact Study. The Carolinas GCSA helped stave off a proposed 7.5-percent tax on all golf rounds in the state in 2009. The association sends dozens of members to the annual South Carolina Golf Week, has made progress on water issues in both states, and maintains regular dialogue with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. The association's input was instrumental in shaping North Carolina's water allocation study, and placed two superintendents on the South Carolina Drought Response Committee.

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