

Front Nine NEWS

**A publication of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Golf Course
Superintendents Association, Inc.
Volume 23, Issue 3 - October 2020**

October Golf, Fishing, Dinner, & Annual Meeting

Thursday, October 8, 2020

**Mt. Hope Golf Course
29790 State Highway 27**

Guys Mills, PA 16327

Hosts - Doug & Merle Smith

Meeting Agenda:

Fishing all day (bring your own tackle)

10:00 am - 12:00 pm Tee Times

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm Social Time

5:30 pm Grilled Steak Dinner

Annual Meeting following dinner

Carts: complimentary

**Meeting Fee: \$30
(payable to NWPGCSA)**

**Cash, checks or credit cards
accepted**

No bar but BYOB is allowed

No locker rooms or showers

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NWPGCSA, Inc. 2020 Meeting Schedule

Thursday, March 12th
March Business Meeting
Riverside Brewing Company
Cambridge Springs, PA

June Golf & Dinner Mtg.
The Kahkwa Club of Erie
Erie, PA
Hosts: Justin Sudo, Daniel
Daub, James Hayes, Jr.
**CANCELLED DUE TO
COVID-19**

August Social Event
There were no scholarship ap-
plicants this year so this event
was not held

Thursday, October 8th
Golf, Fishing, Dinner,
& Annual Mtg.
Mt. Hope Golf Course
Guys Mills, PA
Hosts: Doug & Merle Smith

October Golf, Fishing, Dinner & Annual Meeting At Mt. Hope Golf Course Thursday, October 8, 2020

ABOUT THE HOST SUPERINTENDENT:

Doug Smith was involved in the construction of Mt. Hope Golf Course, which began in June of 1990, and has been the General Manager since it opened in May of 1993. He also had the experience of working for Lou Morgan at Toftrees during a spring semester at Penn State University and one summer working for Eddie Locke at Edgewood Country Club in Pittsburgh. Doug graduated from Penn State University in 1993, but, surprisingly, his degree was not for turfgrass. He holds a B.A. degree in General Arts & Science: Speech Communication; English Composition; Labor and Industrial Relations with a French Minor! Doug has been a NWPGCSA member since 1993.

Doug and his wife, Claire, have been married 26 years. Claire is a teacher at Maplewood Junior High School. They have two sons. Douglas, 23, graduated from Notre Dame and works for Google in Seattle, Washington. Steven, 21, is a senior at Temple University. Doug lists his interests as family and work. In response to the question, "What is your worst problem and/or best solution?", Doug's answer is to continue to improve the course on a very tight budget and to overcome the family hierarchy.

ABOUT THE COURSE:

Mt. Hope Golf Course is the only Merle Smith designed course in the world! Merle was born on the 80 acre dairy farm that became the original 9-hole course. Merle sold golf course maintenance supplies for 26 years, but in 1988, he purchased his childhood home and land from his mother, Ila Poly Smith. The purpose was to provide a lifetime home for his mother and to design and develop a 9-hole golf course. PolySmith Inc. was founded by Merle and Mary Smith along with Janet (niece) and Dr. Cecil Furer, D.O. Construction began in 1990 under the supervision of Gladys (sister) and William Mcfadden. The 9-hole course opened in May of 1993. An additional 127 acres were purchased, and the second nine opened in 2001. PolySmith Inc. is a Chapter S corporations with 50 shareholders all but 3 of which are family members.

Mt. Hope Golf Course is home to the Maplewood Tigers and Lakeview Sailors high school teams. The course features include water hazards, sand and grass bunkers, and trees and meadows. Greens average 6,300 sq. ft. and are built to USGA recommendations. Greens, tees, and fairways were originally seeded with bentgrass. The diversity of holes requires thought in club selection. It has a total yardage of 6,807 with a par of 72.

RESERVATIONS:

Please RSVP by Tuesday, October 6th by calling Julie Powell at (724) 421-7588. Tee times can be arranged by calling the course at (814) 789-2475. Guests are welcome.

DIRECTIONS:

Mt. Hope Golf Course is located halfway between Meadville and Titusville on Rt. 27. The address to enter in your GPS is 29790 State Highway 27, Guys Mills, PA 16327.

Thank You to Our Commercial Members!

Our Gold Patrons



Our Silver Patrons

BASF
Nutrien Solutions

Our Bronze Patrons

E-Z-GO, Cushman Utility Vehicles
Hodges Rash Company, Inc.
Prime Source
Syngenta
Weaver Golf & Turf Solutions

EDITOR'S NOTE

I've run out of adjectives to describe this year—unprecedented, uncertain, unusual—in short, just plain CRAZY!!! We've all been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in some manner, and we all crave a return to normalcy. Some of you may wonder why NWPGCSA decided to hold a live, October meeting at all. I think it was the desire for normalcy that contributed to the decision. In conversations with NWPGCSA President, Kyle Woodfield, we felt it was important to offer the opportunity for some NWPGCSA fellowship to any of our members looking for it. In addition, our chapter would fulfill our affiliated agreement with GCSAA to hold a spring business meeting and a fall annual meeting each year. We understand some of you may not feel comfortable gathering together yet, and that's okay. However, our hosts, Doug and Merle Smith, afforded us the opportunity to meet outside under the roof of their large, picnic pavilion where we can enjoy a great steak dinner and some fellowship while still socially distancing. Golf and fishing beforehand is the icing on the cake and are two activities that have been "allowed" throughout most of this pandemic.

As I noted, all of us have been affected by COVID-19 in some manner. We will never forget the panic of wondering if we would be allowed to maintain our golf courses, let alone have customers golfing on them. Now, we are seeing a boom in golf course play (See article on Page 8) with many new golfers taking up the game. I would like to take a moment to recognize our commercial members listed to the left who have also gone through the turmoil of the pandemic. When times were so uncertain in the spring when dues were being collected, the companies to the left did not waver in their support of NWPGCSA. With so many meetings and conferences going virtual or not being held at all, these companies have certainly lost some "bang" for their advertising "buck" as well as the all important opportunity to meet their customers face-to-face (or mask-to-mask). You've heard me state often that NWPGCSA could not survive without the support of our commercial members. I would, personally, like to thank each and every one of the commercial members whose companies are listed here for your support of NWPGCSA during these hard and uncertain times. I encourage you all to do the same the next time you talk to these members either in person, on the phone, or in correspondence.

Finally, I want to thank the NWPGCSA Board of Directors to agreeing to keep their positions for one more year (2021). Ordinarily, we would have been holding elections for the entire board at our annual meeting this year, but we decided to postpone that election for one year since it would be difficult to guarantee a quorum. This gives us a whole year to come up with a slate of officers and directors for election to two-year terms for 2022-2023. I implore any of you with even a slight interest in serving on the board to contact myself or any current board member about what board service entails.

Thank you! Julie Powell, Editor, "Front Nine News"



IS YOUR STATE FILLED?

As chapter executives, we need your help recruiting grassroots ambassadors who will promote, protect and defend the golf industry from harmful legislation and regulation.

Ambassadors are provided all the training and tools necessary to advocate; but the most important role for an Ambassador is sharing their story. In the words of Ambassador Mitch Savage, "Superintendents don't need to be legislative experts. We just need to share our stories of stewardship we employ every day at our facilities."

We need your help to reach our end of year goal. Please review the state by state breakdown (attached) to see which Ambassador slots still need to be filled in your state and then contact Michael Lee at (800) 472-7878, ext. 3612 to work towards filling those spots. As a thank you for helping recruit, you will receive a **\$50 gift card of your choice** once all spots are filled in a single state!

A few highlights of the Grassroots Ambassador Program:

- Ambassadors provide course tours to Members of Congress and their staff demonstrating how BMPs help protect the environment.
- Ambassadors are eligible to win the Grassroots Ambassador Leadership Award and receive all expenses paid trip to National Golf Day where they will be recognized for their advocacy efforts.
- Chapter executives who are GCSAA members can also serve as Grassroots Ambassadors.

VISIT
WWW.GCSAA.ORG/AMBASSADORS
 FOR MORE INFORMATION

Looking For An Educational Opportunity?

With the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council cancelling the November 2020 Penn State Turf Conference and all the Winter 2021 Turf Conferences, following is the information on the upcoming West Virginia GCSA Turf Conference. The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council will be offering virtual education opportunities throughout the winter of 2021. Check the PTC website of www.paturf.org for more information.

WVGCSA/WVPGA 32nd Annual Turf Conference

Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020

Anytime	Golf on Lakeview Course (\$20 per person)
Time TBD	WVPGA Education
3:00pm-5:00pm	Early Conference Registration/Check In
3:00pm-5:00pm	Grand Ballroom - Vendor/Exhibitor Set-Up
5:00pm-7:00pm	Grand Ballroom- Vendor Reception (Open Bar)
8:00pm	Hospitality Room (Oak Room)- Food & Drinks Provided

Wednesday, November 4th, 2020

All Conference Presentations will be held in the Grand Ballroom

Session Moderator: Jason Hollen, President of the WVGCSA, Stonewall Resort

6:00am-7:15am	Breakfast/Trade Show Opens—Grand Ballroom
7:15am-7:30am	Welcome and Announcements
7:30am-8:00am	"Reviewing the Year 2020" (Virtual Talk) Elliott Dowling, USGA Agronomist
8:00am-9:00am	"New Broadleaf Weed Technology" Lena, Bioni, Corteva Agriscience
9:00am-10:00am	"Anthracnose: The Scourge on the Modern Putting Green" Richard Buckley, Rutgers University
10:00am-11:00am	"Dollar Spot: The Most Important Turf Disease" Richard Buckley, Rutgers University

11:00pm-12:00pm Trade Show— Grand Ballroom

12:00pm-1:00pm Lunch

Session Moderator: Bobby Cline Vice President of the WVGCSA, Guyan G&CC

1:00pm-2:00pm	"Innovations in Golf Course Maintenance" Greg Lovell, Aquatrols
2:00pm-3:00pm	"Turfgrass Insect and Earthworm Pest Management Year-in-Review" (Virtual Talk) Dr. Ben McGraw, Penn State
3:00pm-3:15pm	Break— Soda
3:15pm-4:15pm	"2020: Golf's Greatest Moment? And What's Next?" Guy Cipriano, Editor-Golf Course Industry Magazine
4:15pm-5:00pm	"WVDA Pesticide Regulatory Update" Chad Carpenter, WV Dept. of Agriculture

**Official Registration Form
WVGCSA/WVPGA Turf Conference**

NAME _____

ADDITIONAL PERSONS _____

FACILITY _____

ATTENDING BANQUET _____ (Including Guest)

Registration Detail

Members: Number attending entire conference
_____ @ \$125 = \$ _____ (includes banquet)

Non-Members: Number attending entire conference
_____ @ \$165 = \$ _____ (includes banquet)

Guests attending banquet only _____ @ \$25 = \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: WVGCSA
If you have any questions, feel free to contact
Amber Breed at 304-638-8978

Please return registration to:

**WVGCSA
PO Box 335
Charleston, WV 25322**

OR

1971wvgcsa@gmail.com

Hotel Room Block Information:

\$75/per person

Call (304)594-1111 for reservations

Rate good until October 25th

Editor's Note: Please understand that I respect the decision of the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council to only offer virtual educational opportunities throughout this coming winter. All associations within the turfgrass industry are struggling with the best and safest ways to handle important meetings and conferences while COVID-19 is still a threat. The Greater Pittsburgh GCSA is still deciding whether or not to hold their January IPM seminars. The GCSAA has already decided to hold their upcoming Chapter Delegates Meeting and their 2021 Golf Industry Show virtually. I am providing the information on the West Virginia GCSA's Turf Conference for those who may prefer attending a conference in person and as a way to assist a neighboring GCSAA affiliated chapter.

Julie Powell, Editor, "Front Nine News"

Despite Spring Shutdowns, 2020 Rounds Outpacing 2019

by [National Golf Foundation](#)

After significant jumps in play during the months of June and July, rounds for 2020 are now outpacing the same period from a year ago.

It almost seems inconceivable given the loss of 20 million spring rounds due coronavirus-related course shutdowns, but rounds were up 13.9% nationwide in June and 19.7% in July. The latter reflects an increase of approximately 10 million more rounds than in July 2019 and the 20% jump was the largest for high-volume summer month since Golf Datatech began the monthly tracking in 2000.

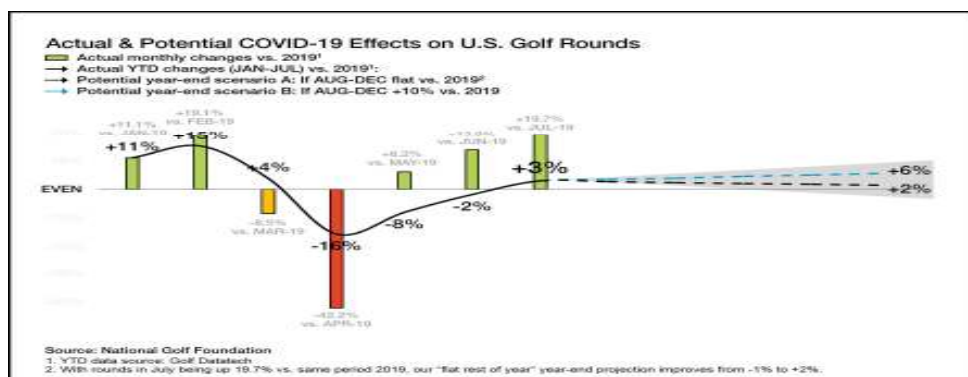
Entering August, rounds were up 3% over the same time frame in 2019, having climbed back from a 16% year-to-date deficit on April 30. More than half of the more than 16,000 U.S. golf courses were temporarily closed in late March and throughout April due to the pandemic.

Indications are that play and engagement appears to have been almost as good in August, based on anecdotal feedback from operators and a number of golf course management companies.

“We are seeing a surge in rounds played at all of our properties,” [KemperSports](#) CEO Steve Skinner, whose company manages more than 120 courses, said in late August. “Demand is very strong from every player type – avid golfers are playing more and a lot of new players are taking up the game. We also are seeing renewed interest in private clubs.

“Across the [KemperSports](#) portfolio, we recorded more than a 25% increase in rounds in July vs. the prior year. Rounds in August are at a similar pace. In what has been a difficult year, it is great to see so many people enjoying the game.”

NGF’s current forecast suggests that rounds could finish up 2% to 6% over last year’s 441 million, barring significant setbacks like a spell of bad weather in golf-rich areas or a virus/election-induced economic hiccup. The industry hasn’t seen a year-over-year increase of 5% or more since 2012, when an early-season heatwave contributed to a major bump in play for parts of the country usually in their offseason for golf.



At [Troon](#), the world’s largest golf management company, indications are that the increase in summer play was consistent in August and that momentum is expected to extend into the final four months of 2020 in some fashion, said Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing Kris Strauss.

“It’s not all sunshine and butterflies because we’re seeing usually less (food & beverage) because of lack of events and weddings,” said Strauss. “And we’re seeing less retail in part because public operators are promoting prepaid tee times and fewer people are coming into the golf shops. Golf rounds and activity are solid, and definitely continuing strongly, but total property-wide revenues are still challenging because of other two revenue sources. We’re going to have that challenge ahead of us for another four to six months or maybe longer. It will still be a grind for operators.”

All in all, the indicators are mostly positive for a continued swell in golf demand. There are five major championships remaining (three for the women and two for the men), plus the lack of other safe and healthy activities, favorable weather in the forecast, and remote work and school for many parts of the country. All create that additional space for golfers (and prospects) to hit the links.

Golf Course Architects Say Action Is Needed To Reduce Hitting Distance



By Richard Humphreys—Wed 09 Sep, 2020

Ninety-five per cent of golf course architects who responded to a recent survey by the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) said action needs to be taken to reduce hitting distances.

“We surveyed the EIGCA membership for their thoughts on a range of factors relating to increased hitting distances, forged through their experience of designing golf courses around the world,” said Christoph Städler, president of the EIGCA. “The most eye-catching result is that 95 per cent of respondents agreed that action needs to be taken to reduce hitting distances.

“The vast majority of respondents [75 per cent] believed that increasing ball flight length and advances in equipment technology are diminishing the skill of the game, which is leading to a simplification of golf course strategy. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents considered a reduction in driving distance of between 10 and 15 per cent would be appropriate.”

The survey also showed that 34 percent of EIGCA members felt that any action to reduce hitting distances should only be applied to tournament professionals, whilst 62 per cent thought that amateurs

(Continued on page 10)

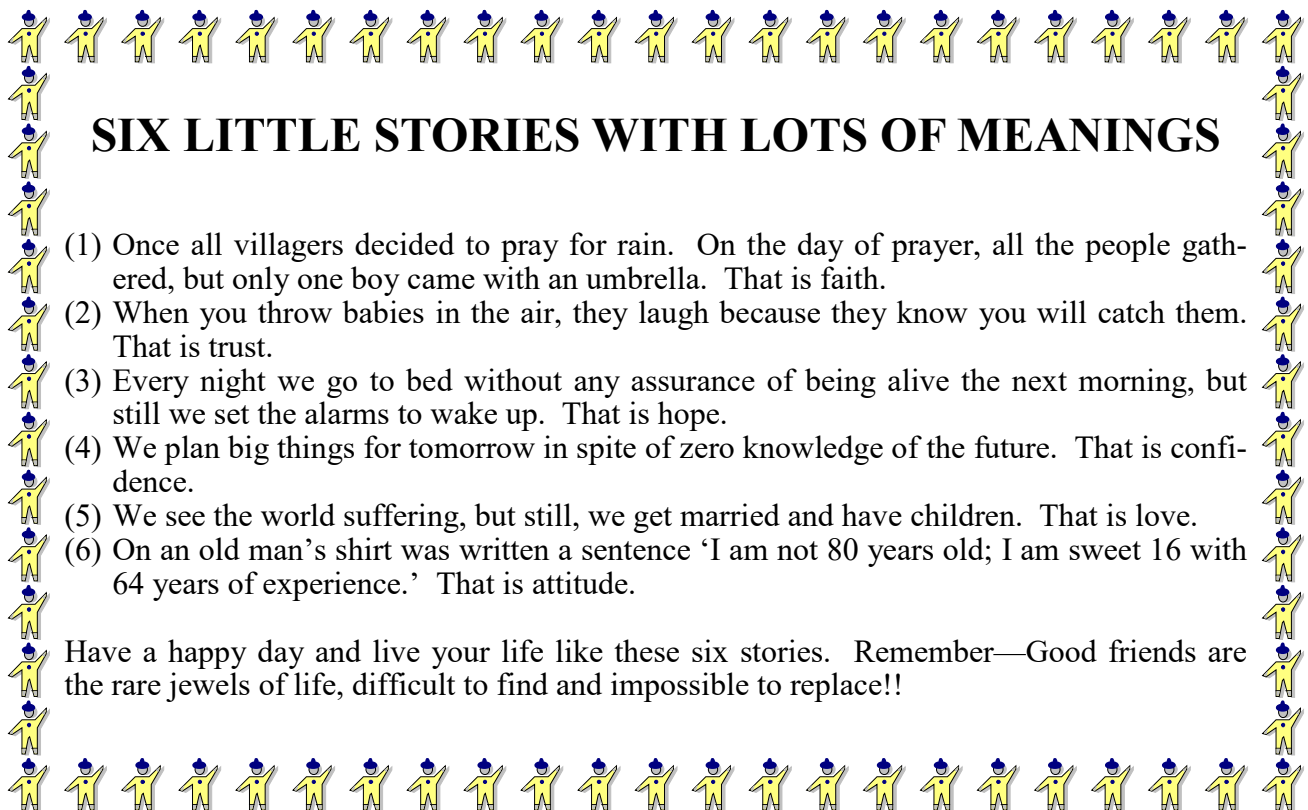
(Continued from page 9)

should be largely spared any regulatory effects. Importantly, 76 per cent thought that hitting distances were having a negative impact on golf course design.

“Golf course architects are clearly concerned about a number of factors influenced by hitting distances, including safety, negative impacts on the environment, land grab and threats to the integrity of historic courses,” said Städler. “Reducing hitting distances could lead to shorter courses which are quicker to play, cheaper to maintain, need less land, are more sustainable, more accessible, and potentially more profitable. At a time when we are looking to increase player participation surely these should be our objectives.

“By the clever use of design, skilled golf course architects are able to achieve a certain balance between the challenge for the best players and fun and playability for weaker and shorter players. With ever increasing hitting distances, this becomes increasingly difficult.”

Sixty percent of the 91 EIGCA members, candidates and students participated in the survey and the EIGCA has sent the responses to The R&A and USGA to assist them with the Distance Insights project.



SIX LITTLE STORIES WITH LOTS OF MEANINGS

- (1) Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That is faith.
- (2) When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. That is trust.
- (3) Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but still we set the alarms to wake up. That is hope.
- (4) We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future. That is confidence.
- (5) We see the world suffering, but still, we get married and have children. That is love.
- (6) On an old man’s shirt was written a sentence ‘I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience.’ That is attitude.

Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories. Remember—Good friends are the rare jewels of life, difficult to find and impossible to replace!!