

Turf's Up in the Inland Empire



Winter 2025

Our thanks to Northwest GCSA Expo golf course hosts: Zach Bauer, CGCS, CDA National Reserve and Tom Walker, Coeur d'Alene Resort

Improving Course Conditions and Much More

The 2026 season is approaching, and with it comes the "Nearly Spring Meeting." This meeting is packed with a wide variety of topics, including the participation of your peers in the session titled "We Made it Through 2025." With a small investment of your time and a relatively low registration fee, you can expect to gain valuable information that will be beneficial to your facility. Learn from the experience of a longtime superintendent and benefit from the expertise of a speaker who was so well-received that he was quickly invited to return.

Wendell Hutchens, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Turfgrass Science, University of Arkansas

"Topsy-Turvy: Fungicides for Non-Disease Management and Non-Fungicides for Disease Management"

"Optimization of Fungicide Applications"



Chris Carson, superintendent emeritus, Echo Lake Country Club, Westfield, NJ, Professional Development and Budgeting/Planning in the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management Program

"Coming Clean: The mistakes that helped me achieve a successful career"

"The Ten Things I Wish They'd Taught Me in Turf School"



Round Table - January 15, 2026

The View Clubhouse, The Golf Club at Black Rock
18168, S. Kimberlite Dr., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Moderated by Dan Frederiksen, GCS
To register, visit the calendar event of iegcsa.org

Join us March 9 & 10, 2026, at Meadow Springs Country Club, Richland, Wash. Host superintendent is Charlie Jones. The Inland Empire GCSA Board Meeting will be held Sunday, March 13. Registration material will be available mid-January. It may be timed with the start of another exceptionally busy season, but your participation could be an important tool to help aid in your success.

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality

Our six-chapter 2026 Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room private event will be at the Tin Roof of Orlando, Wednesday, 6:30 - 9:30, February 4, 2026. This eclectic space offers indoor and outdoor options. Complimentary food and beverages will be offered thanks to the generosity of our allied partners. We are soliciting sponsors and thank all who are so supportive each year.

Ready for Your Rounds

Mike Kingsley, silent auction chair, is reaching out to our superintendents for the annual donation of rounds to our silent auction. Please respond to Mike or, even better, reach out to him first! (509) 900-8843. It is important we have your rounds in hand prior to the event so we may note any restrictions. All contributions are greatly appreciated. We are grateful to Kingsley for our annual success!

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Inland Empire Chapter

GCSAA

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

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The Power of Compost: Two and a Half Years of Fairway and Tee Transformation

Mitchell Larson
Yakima Country Club, Yakima, Wash.

Note: The color version of the newsletter found on our homepage of iegcsa.org offers picture clarity.

When we first began topdressing our fairways and tees with turf-grade compost two and a half years ago, I'll admit—even I was curious to see just how much of an impact it could have. We'd always used traditional sand topdressing and relied on a familiar mix of fertilizers, wetting agents, and fungicides to keep our turf performing through the rigors of play and weather. But our soils were telling us something different: they were tired, layered, and struggling to breathe. Water wasn't infiltrating as it should. Fertilizer applications weren't giving us the return they once did. And disease pressure was creeping higher every season.

So, we took a leap into something different: three applications of turf-grade compost,



each at about a half-inch rate, over two and a half years. The transformation since then has been nothing short of remarkable.

Rebuilding the Foundation—Naturally

One of the first and most profound changes we've noticed is in the soil itself. Compost is more than just "organic matter"—it's a living, breathing ecosystem of beneficial microorganisms, humic substances, and slow-release nutrients. Each application we've made has worked its way down



through the soil profile, effectively breaking up the old, compacted layers that had formed from years of conventional topdressing and mechanical traffic.

That natural biological activity—tiny soil organisms doing what they do best—has turned what was once a dense, stratified profile into a more open, porous structure. The result? Improved infiltration rates, better root depth, and a far more resilient turf canopy. We used to see water sit on the surface

after heavy rain or irrigation cycles; now, it moves through the soil evenly and predictably. At the same time, that improved structure means the soil holds onto moisture longer during dry spells, giving us the best of both worlds—enhanced drainage and increased water-holding capacity.

Nutrient Availability That Lasts

Another noticeable change has been in the nutritional dynamics of our turf. Compost provides a slow, steady release of essential nutrients—nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and trace elements—but in forms that are naturally chelated and available to plants when they need them. That's a big difference from the quick-hit synthetics that can surge growth one week and leave turf hungry the next.

Our fairways and tees now have a more balanced color, consistent growth rate, and overall improved density without the peaks and valleys that



used to accompany our fertilizer cycles. The turf has a deeper, more natural green that comes from true plant health rather than a forced flush of growth.

Less Chemistry, More Biology

One of the most exciting results of this compost program has been our ability to dramatically reduce chemical inputs. Turfgrass health begins below the surface, and as our soils became richer in microbial life, we saw a sharp decline in the need for pesticides, particularly fungicides.

Before composting, we battled persistent fairy ring and other soil-borne diseases that seemed to reappear every summer no matter what we sprayed. After the second compost application, those rings simply stopped showing up. The same story holds true for other common diseases. The compost-enhanced soil profile has provided more oxygen, more balanced moisture, and less compaction—all

continued page 4





GOT CARBON?

The importance of carbon cannot be denied. That's why we've been building it into our product offering for more than twenty years. Our diverse line of carbon-based humic acid products is designed to improve fertilizer efficiency, provide a food source for soil microbes, and increase overall plant health.



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conditions that suppress the anaerobic environments where pathogens thrive. Today, we rely on far fewer preventative fungicide applications, and we've seen a measurable drop in both the number and severity of outbreaks.

Fewer Wetting Agents and Smarter Irrigation

Another area of improvement—and one that golfers can literally see and feel—is water management. Prior to the compost program, our fairways often exhibited hydrophobic conditions in summer, requiring routine wetting agent applications just to keep moisture uniform. Now, the improved soil structure and increased organic matter allow water to move evenly through the root zone. We've reduced our use of wetting agents by about 50% since starting compost topdressing. Our irrigation cycles have become shorter and more efficient, and turf recovery after drought or heat stress is noticeably faster.

Enhanced Playability and Member Experience

From the golfer's perspective, all these soil improvements translate into one sim-

ple thing: better playing conditions. The fairways are firmer, yet more forgiving underfoot. Tee surfaces stay smoother and recover faster from divots. Even after heavy rainfall, the course is playable sooner. The ball sits up nicely on a consistent, healthy turf canopy, and mower quality has improved as the turf density has increased. The part of this program that excites me most is seeing the science translate directly into the golfer's experience.

Environmental Stewardship and Long-Term Sustainability

As superintendents, we have a responsibility that goes beyond aesthetics. Every input we apply—whether it's fertilizer, water, or a pesticide—has both a financial and environmental cost. By using compost as a natural soil amendment, we're not only improving our turf performance but also reducing our environmental footprint.

The organic matter from turf-grade compost enhances carbon sequestration in the soil, supports microbial biodiversity, and reduces the need for fertilizers and chemical inputs. In simple terms, we're creating a healthier ecosystem underfoot—one that requires less intervention from above. That's a legacy worth building on. The soil we're improving today will continue to benefit the course for years to come, supporting healthier turf, fewer inputs, and a more resilient playing surface well into the future.

Looking Ahead

After two and a half years of compost applications, the fairways and tees have fundamentally changed. The soil feels alive again, and the results are visible in every mow, every divot, and every round of golf played. But we're not stopping here. We'll continue half-inch topdressings in the fall and monitor how nutrient and moisture dynamics evolve over time. The real success of this program isn't just what

we see today—it's what we won't have to do tomorrow. Fewer sprays. Fewer applications. Fewer headaches. And turf that's healthier, more self-sustaining, and better for the environment and the golfers who play on it.

Final Thoughts

What started as an experiment has become one of the most beneficial agronomic programs we've ever undertaken. Compost topdressing has proven that building soil health is the key to turf health, and turf health is the key to everything else—playability, consistency, aesthetics, and sustainability. Sometimes the best solutions aren't the newest or most high-tech—they're the ones that work in harmony with nature. After two and a half years, it's clear: turf-grade compost has given our fairways and tees new life, from the ground up, and we don't plan on stopping anytime soon.



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Tips on Networking from a True Introvert

Mike Bednar

Palouse Ridge Golf Club - Pullman, WA

For introverts, the thought of networking can be intimidating, as it often involves meeting new people and engaging in conversations in a social setting. I have always dreaded most social situations where there are large numbers of people I have never met. My happy place is still sitting on a fairway mower out ahead of play, or better yet, in a duck blind. I have become a better socializer and developed an adequate network over my career by continuing to force myself outside my comfort zone. I still prefer to be by myself or sometimes try to "be invisible" in a large room of people. With a few modifications, you can make networking a more comfortable and effective experience.

Here are some tips for introverts to network effectively:

1. Focus on Quality Over Quantity: Rather than attending large events and trying to meet as many people as possible, consider attending smaller, more intimate events or reaching out to a few people individually. This way, you can have deeper, more meaningful conversations.

2. Prepare Ahead of Time: Before attending an event, research the attendees and identify the people you want to connect with. This way, you'll feel more confident and focused when you arrive.

3. Find Your Niche: Look for networking events or committees that align with your interests and professional goals. This will make it easier for you to find like-minded individuals and have more enjoyable conversations.

4. Be Yourself: Don't try to be someone you're not. Introverts tend to be great listeners, which can be a valuable asset in networking. Allow yourself to be authentic and use your natural strengths to build relationships.

5. Follow Up: After meeting someone, be sure to follow up with them by sending an email, handwritten thank-you card, or connecting with them on social media. This will help keep the connection alive and open the door for future opportunities.

I value all the relationships and connections I have made in this industry over the years. Early in my career, I had an "I can do it all by myself" way of thinking. Now, after almost 30 years in the industry, I understand how valuable a network is and am very thankful for mine. I have grown as a person and a superintendent by being active in both the local Inland Empire chapter and the

national GCSAA and continuing to volunteer for committees whenever possible. Remember, networking is a long-term process and doesn't have to be uncomfortable. It can get easier with time. By finding events and people that align with your interests and being yourself, you can build valuable relationships and advance your career. If you see me at a future event, come over and say hello.



Congratulations to the top two teams of the IEGCSA Crew Challenge, our representatives of the Northwest GCSA Crew Challenge



Kalispel Golf & CC 57 (above) Palouse Ridge GC 58 (below)



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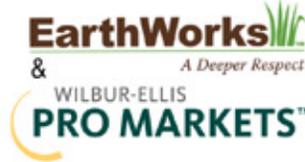
The experience was beneficial thanks to so many people who supported the event and who participated! We appreciate all of you for making this conference happen.



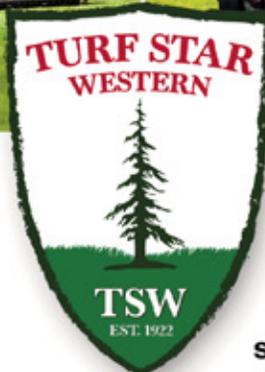
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A Greenside Chat with Kalman Zaranec

Tom Walker, Coeur d'Alene Resort, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Front Nine

1. What is your nickname, and how did you get it? Pretty simple here, Kal – short for Kalman.

2. Tell us about Circling Raven Golf Club. Owned and operated by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the golf course was opened in 2003 and designed by Gene Bates. The golf course is around 120 acres of maintained turf on 620 acres of property.



3. How many years have you been in the industry, and what was your first job? Officially, 17 years, and it was as a groundskeeper at Bunker Hill Golf Course in Medina, Ohio. Unofficially I

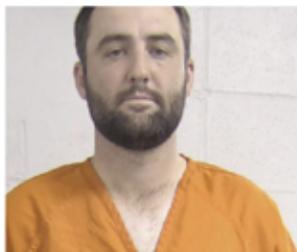


was around nine years old when I started spending my summers with my uncle in Texas, working at Falconhead Golf Club where he was the superintendent.

4. Tell us about your family. I have been married for three years now, and my wife (Amanda) and I just celebrated our daughter turning one.

5. What is your favorite part about your job/profession? The cool crisp mornings with a heavy dew and the equipment leaving the shop to prepare the golf course. I love the industry and everyone you meet (including Tom Walker), and sharing ideas with each other.

6. Who are the four golfers on your Mount Rushmore of golf? (And you can't include Geoff Haynes.) Scottie (mugshot photo, obviously), Phil, John Daly, and Tiger (mugshot photo, again— for consistency).



7. Would you like to give a shout-out to anyone who influenced you as you were coming up in the industry? Absolutely—my Uncle Craig, who really got me started in the industry, and my cousin, Chuck, who is also a superintendent in York, PA.

8. What is the best story you have about someone calling off work? A certain employee who just recently called the CDA Resort to let us know they won't make it in today. They spoke with the golf shop at the Resort—wrong golf course and wrong department.

9. If someone is traveling to the Coeur d'Alene/Worley area, what is one activity they need to do? Spend time on the lake, play golf at Circling Raven, enjoy all of the amenities that the Coeur d'Alene Casino has to offer, and then catch dinner at

Caddyshack in Coeur d'Alene.

Back Nine

10. What would your dream foursome be? Scottie, John Daly, Geoff Haynes, and me.

11. If you weren't a golf course superintendent, what line of work would you have pursued? Most likely some sort of engineering profession.

12. What is your favorite sports team and why? The Ohio State Buckeyes. Born and raised a Buckeye fan and graduated from The Ohio State University, O-H!



13. We're going to play a game called "Drink One, Spill One, Give One Away" with the following drinks: Black Cherry White Claw, IPA, and Bud Light. How would you play it? Spill the Bud Light, drink the IPA, give the White Claw to Tom.

14. If a genie granted you one wish for your golf course, what would it be? A perfect irrigation system with no leaks, no weeping heads, no communication issues, and perfect coverage with auto-raising and leveling heads that always return to "auto." A guy can dream.

15. Can you recommend a book, movie, TV show, and/or podcast? My absolute favorite movie – "Out Cold."

16. What are the three items in your cart that you never leave the shop without? My dog, irrigation map, and valve key.

17. If you could drop everything and jet off some-where for vacation tomorrow, where would you go? Cabo

18. What is your favorite meal? My wife makes this incredible Buffalo Chicken Sweet Potato dish, with some ranch dressing and fresh cilantro. It's fantastic!

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