

prairieview golf club



Turf Notes from the Turf Care Center

*A Quick Nine
with PrairieView
Superintendent
Matt Henkel*

#1 How did you get into the turfgrass profession?

A combination of a love for the outdoors and also growing up working on the farm is what led me to the turfgrass industry. I also played quite a bit of golf throughout middle and high school. The fact that I could combine a little bit of everything that I enjoyed and turn it into a career is what led me down this path.

#2 How long have you been working at PrairieView?

I worked under Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Steve Storz, as an intern in 2001 after graduating college. The following year I accepted an Assistant Superintendent position, and in 2011, I was promoted to my current position as Superintendent.

#3 What do you feel is the best part about your job?

I get to be the first one on the golf course in the morning just as the sun is coming up. It is something that is very rewarding and energizing to me, that can't be replicated in most other professions.

#4 What do you feel is the worst part about your job?

It definitely has to be the stress that it puts on family life during the summer months. I typically put in about 350-450 overtime hours from April through November and that leads to me missing out on some baseball and softball games and other family events during those times. Luckily, I have been fortunate to have some really great crews over the years that have made it possible for me to step away from the course from time to time and keep my sanity.

#5 What is the best piece of advice you give to your new crew members?

I tell them that they are going to make mistakes out there on the course. Learn from those and try to not to repeat them. If they can do that, they'll become a valuable part of the team.

#6 How many golf courses have you worked at in your career?

PrairieView is it as far as getting paid to do so. I was fortunate to be able to volunteer and work alongside the agronomy team in prepping Bethpage Black for the 2009 U.S Open Championship on Long Island in New York.

#7 What is something that non golfers often seemed surprised to learn about golf course maintenance?

A lot of people that I talk to that do not play golf are often times very surprised to learn that we actually can move the hole location on the greens.

#8 What is the biggest agronomic challenge you face in managing PrairieView?

PrairieView's greens were constructed based upon USGA specs for sand based greens. Maintaining bentgrass on what equates to a beach, all the while cutting the grass at less than an eighth of an inch provides a constant challenge throughout the season. An aging irrigation system makes it that much trickier.

#9 What do you do in the winter months when the course is closed?

The offseason is spent prepping for the next golf season. All of the mowers, tractors, aerators, and other equipment has to get serviced and ready to start the year in working condition. Course work involves tree trimming and removing any dead or diseased trees as well. I also spend a considerable amount of time meeting with vendors, attending seminars, and putting together the next season's agronomic program. Finally, winter time is when I get to spend a little bit more time with family and friends and to get rested up for another golf season.

