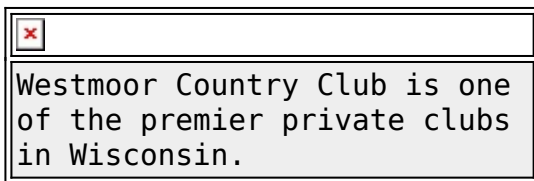


## Classic and Modern



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Regrassing and renovation at Westmoor



Westmoor Country Club in Brookfield, Wis., is one of the classic Midwestern layouts that benefited from the architectural expertise of William Langford and Theodore Moreau. Established in 1926, the private club has continually enhanced and upgraded the design while respecting its traditional roots, with numerous bunkers and sloping greens. However, like many clubs from that era, agronomic pressures have mounted with increasing green speeds and levels of play that could not be envisioned when the course was established.

For 34 years, Superintendent Jerry Kershasky has produced an excellent product for his members, but as *Poa annua* came to dominate the putting surfaces, the ability to provide consistent, top-quality carpets has been challenged, especially with the potential of dry hot summers and cold windy winters.

The members laid out Westmoor in 1926, and several architects have since left their marks on the course. David Gill remodeled nine in 1973, and prior to that, in 1957, Langford & Moreau completely redesigned five holes along the interstate. "They're our best holes," says Kershasky, who adds that shortly after they were finished, the club set about softening them. "Our seventh is a great, uphill par-4 to what used to be a Redan-like green, but the club eliminated the back bunker and raised the back of the green. They thought it played too difficult, I guess."

In the early 1990s, Westmoor resolved to restore Langford's work and carry it throughout the course. Bob Lohmann—whose Langford renovation portfolio

includes West Bend and Ozaukee in Wisconsin, Happy Hollow in Nebraska and Minnehaha in South Dakota—was called upon to assist the club in this effort. Bunkering on several of the Langford holes was restored, but the remainder of Lohmann's master plan was put on hold. This coming summer, the club will complete the process of upgrading the course, including the installation of new bentgrass greens.

All 18 greens will be converted to either A-1, A-4 or a combination of the two, and the layout's hodgepodge of design features will be unified under a single style inspired by William Langford. The course architects at Marengo, Ill.-based Lohmann Golf Designs (LGD) have pioneered the conversion of Midwestern golf greens from troublesome cocktails of *Poa annua* to A-4 bent. Westmoor's decision to convert its putting surfaces was an object lesson in the art of working with memberships and staging renovation work in northern climates.

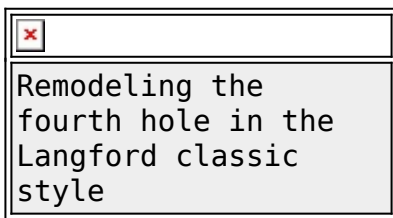
LGD made its formal presentation to the Westmoor membership in late August 2007, and it didn't arrive at this town meeting-style gathering with just its normal array of literature, slides and computer-enhanced, before-and-after imagery. Accompanying the LGD team this time were Dr. Joe Vargas, the legendary Michigan State University agronomy researcher; Bob Vavrek, the USGA Green Section director for the north-central region; and Dr. Tom Nikolai, another distinguished MSU agronomist. "Everything hinged on the decision to regrass," says Lohmann. "We felt like we had to really make the case, so we brought out the big guns."

Dr. Nikolai talked with the Westmoor membership about the different approaches to managing putting surfaces for consistent green speed, something A-4 enables. His colleague, Dr. Vargas, discussed A-4's ability, due to its extreme density, to compete with, and ultimately rebuff, *Poa annua* when properly managed. Vavrick related similar, more anecdotal stories from clubs across the upper Midwest, and shared his experiences working just south of this Milwaukee suburb, in Chicago, where several clubs have gone to A-4 greens with great results.

✖ The fragility and inconsistency of *Poa annua* greens, in this climate, is no secret to Westmoor members, who nevertheless made it clear they have higher and higher standards for speed and consistency. These simply aren't met by *Poa* greens cut close in the summertime, when heat stress and the *Poa*'s lack of root growth has them teetering on the brink of death every year, despite dogged hand-watering regimens.

"Any club member in Milwaukee knows the stakes. Still, there is great anxiety about regrassing greens on an 80-year-old golf course like Westmoor, that's why we went to such great lengths to make the case for conversion to A-4," said Lohmann, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "We have a long history with this club, but they needed to hear the pros and cons from the experts, and there are some cons. The A-4 does require some hand-picking and chemical control. We also advocated for the removal of hundreds of trees because the A-4 (any grass really) would require better air movement to truly thrive. We just wanted to make sure all the issues were discussed before this project went to a vote." The club decided

to move ahead with the project, the ayes claiming a sturdy 72 percent of the vote.

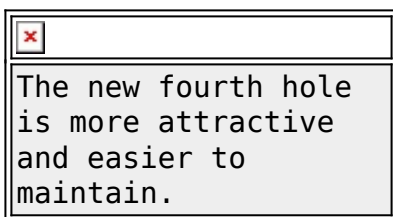


The process will start this spring with new drainage, planning the work so that it will be completed well before the regrassing. Stuart, Fla.-based XGD Drainage will remove 2-inch strips of green sod before digging 15-inch drainage trenches spaced every 6 feet in a modified herringbone design. XGD will then lay down 2-inch drainage tile and refill the trenches with a 6:3:1 mix of sand, soil and peat, an attempt to match the greens' existing push-up soil profile. The sod will then be relaid and members will get in some play before the rest of the project closes the course.

Fumigation will begin on August 1. "Hendrix and Dail, Inc. is handling all the fumigation. They handle the majority of fumigation in agriculture and on golf courses east of the Mississippi," says Kershasky. "They are certified and licensed in many of the states in the East, South and Midwest, Wisconsin included. They do a considerable amount of work in agriculture in Wisconsin and have a good working relationship with our state regulators, so we have had no problems with lining up the process."

While the greens are growing in, LGD will use August, September and October to renovate the remaining holes in a fashion consistent with Langford's steep-faced bunkering and strategic angles at greenside and along fairways. "It would have been easy to blow up every hole and start from scratch, but we worked hard to

evoke the Langford spirit within our redesigned holes while addressing requirements of the A-4 greens," explained Todd Quitno, LGD's senior designer. "For example, the green on 12, a long par-4, was so steep in front that it was unplayable. With A-4, which allows for even shorter mowing heights, that slope will be even more unmanageable, so we're expanding the back of that putting surface and preserving the steep area as a very deceptive false front."





Kershasky has done his own research regarding grassing choices and despite the case for a monostand of A4, has yet to reach a final decision. "A-4 and A-1 have been used the most in the Chicago area and in at a few courses in Wisconsin. I'm now leaning towards A-1 and may put in a 50/50 mix of A-1 and

A-4. How I came up with these two was from a bentgrass greens study sponsored by the USGA, GCSAA and the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, which was started in 1997 at North Shore Country Club in Glenview, Ill., and was rated over a five-year period. They rated greens for cultivar of the month, turf quality and percentage of *Poa annua* invasion. The top bents were A-1 and A-4. I gave a presentation to our board of directors on this and sent a copy of it to Bob Lohmann and consulted with Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State and Dr. John Stier of the University of Wisconsin on both, or either one, of these two A-series grasses for our greens. They both agreed, either one of them should render outstanding greens."

The veteran superintendent has also consulted with his contemporaries about their experiences. "In the Chicago area, I talked with Dan Marco, Ruth Lake Country Club [A-1], Al Fierst, Oak Park Country Club [A-4] and Tom Lively, Medinah Country Club [A-1+A-4]," says Kershasky. "In Wisconsin, Jake Renner, The Legends of Brandy Brook [A-4], Jeff Rottier, Erin Hills Golf Course [A-4] and Matt Kregel, The Club at Strawberry Creek [A-1]." Feedback from people who are actually managing the surfaces is invaluable when making such a crucial decision.

Kershasky and his crew have been part of every decision made about the renovation. "I have several excellent assistants and two outstanding equipment technicians, and we all have been working to get the whole project approved for the last few years. We proposed the grass types for greens, tees, fairways and roughs and the XGD drainage for the greens. Lately we have been demoing equipment that will handle the mowing duties on the slopes." The staff includes Operations Manager Mark Mejchar, Equipment Technicians John Niemiec and Scott Reis, Assistants Phil Spitz and Bryan Bergner, Manager of Horticulture Jim Hicks, and Manager of Hispanic Affairs Macario Ramirez.

The crew should not have a problem finding enough water to properly establish the new turf. "The months of August and September are excellent grow-in months," says Kershasky. "We just deepened one of our irrigation ponds, and between this one and five others that are all connected with underground pipe, we now have a seven-week supply of rain runoff water. We provide runoff havens for a stretch of Interstate I-94 and a 10-block suburb area of the city of Brookfield. In a 1-inch rain we collect more than 1million gallons of water in these ponds. We also have a well if we need it."

	
The 18th green with updated classic features.	The 18th green before remodeling work by Golf Course Architect Bob Lohmann.

Kershasky's worry is if the precipitation takes the other course. "Too much rain in August and September is my biggest concern. That will push back, or wash out, our seeding of the greens. Normal or dry conditions would be most beneficial."

With the sensitivity to classic design of the Lohmann firm, the consensus

built by including everyone of the maintenance staff in the decision making process and the solid track record of superintendent Kershasky, Westmoor is poised for a successful project that will move the club into a new era.

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