

## ***Most Valuable Technician Award Nomination***



### **Herb Berg Nomination**

*Submitted by John Zimmers, Class A superintendent at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club and a 17-year member of GCSAA.*

One of the most vital ingredients to our recipe for championship conditions at Oakmont Country Clubs is our equipment technician, Herb Berg. One would be negligent if not to, at the very least, consider Herb for such a prominent honor as the 2010 GCM Most Valuable Technician (MVT) Award. Herb fully exemplifies all of the necessary traits that other turf technician strives to possess and exude.

There are countless reasons why Herb Berg should not only be nominated, but also be chosen for the GCM Most Valuable Technician (MVT) of the Year Award. The fleet of equipment and mowers under his watchful eye has already hosted two major championships (2003 U.S. Amateur and 2007 U.S. Open), and is now preparing to host the 2010 U.S. Women's Open. Herb will be the first equipment technician to host three national championships governed by the USGA in a seven-year period at the same venue. Herb's focus and concentration are unsurpassed as they can handle virtually any mechanical task.

Herb Berg has incredible natural aptitude and intelligence that enables him to not only keep everything running, but also allows him to enhance practically every piece of equipment through his in-depth fabrication abilities. Superintendents, technicians, distributors and reps from across the world contact Herb on a regular basis to receive consultations, ideas for manufacturing improvements, or troubleshooting advice. As Herb is constantly working on very involved projects, rebuilds, fabrications, and constant grinding, one would think that some of the small basic details would fall by the wayside; this is not the case. Every piece of equipment consistently receives the same level of meticulous care indicative of his conscientious personality and high level of personal pride.

Besides caring for the entire grounds fleet of equipment, Herb also helps out everyone else. He has, on countless occasions, helped out other departments within the club affording them with cost savings, increased efficiency and improved productivity. To name a few of his accomplishments in 2009, Herb has fabricated and welded metal clubhouse equipment, engineered new tomato racks for the kitchen, repaired employee vehicles, repaired contractors equipment, received several employee awards, provided troubleshooting advice for large turf equipment manufacturers for research and development and led several department wide initiatives; he can and does do it all. Besides catering to other departments within the club, Herb is also sometimes requested by name by specific members. He has handled various tasks off property on his own

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accord and has stayed after hours to fix something for a member. His mechanical skill and ability is possibly only out shadowed by his thoughtful and giving personality.

It would be remiss not to mention Herb's ability to manage the repair and maintenance of such a vast, diverse fleet of equipment in times where fiscal forecasts and budgetary restraints are at a very high premium. His eye for detail and innovative skill set continuously prolong the life of Oakmont's equipment fleet. Herb is able to fortify strong relationships with all vendors to retain the best possible pricing and keep his running inventory fully stocked as to remain somewhat insulated from severe, short term price fluctuations. Through his unmatched mechanical brilliance, he is also able to create increased cost savings. When the norm would be to purchase a part to fix a piece of equipment and the funds are not available to do so, it is not uncommon for Herb to reroute an electrical system, bypass a valve or fabricate his own solution for a fraction of the cost. Herb's ability to find savings is also apparent through his tireless work ethic. At least two to three times per week, Herb — after hours and off the clock — picks up parts orders, drops off items at the machine shop and is seen cleaning his workstation. It is also common practice to see Herb working on other employee's vehicles late after work. Herb has done it all from brakes and mufflers to simple oil changes. He is never afraid to do whatever it takes to accomplish any task in the most effective, cost-efficient manner.

Besides the aforementioned accomplishments of maintaining an outstanding equipment fleet, providing large cost savings for the club and constantly lending a helping hand, Herb has also experienced and taken part in several projects that other technicians can only imagine. Herb has helped tremendously with massive undertakings with the grounds department and the club as a whole. Herb has been thoroughly involved in gas-well installations, a Pennsylvania Turnpike Project, major championships, clubhouse renovations, new facility construction, utility installation and relocation, bridge construction, a complete golf course renovation, paving and many other capital projects. His involvement ranges from adapting equipment, quality control, meeting and exceeding strict deadlines and fixing any and all equipment used by contractors and labor personnel.

Perhaps most importantly, Herb is able to modify, grind or face any knife or reel. He allows us to achieve precision consistency at some of the lowest cutting heights in the business. Oakmont is known for its firm, fast putting greens and U.S. Open-like conditions on a daily basis. To meet the expectations of the membership, our mowing frequency is very, very extreme, and Herb never misses a beat providing the sharpest units year round. Managing grass as aggressively as we do at Oakmont comes with a new set of challenges. These hardships include increased disease pressure, severe summer stress, increased play and the need for additional topdressing, along with a laundry list of other possible dilemmas. As one can infer, this puts an increased premium on providing a sharp, quality cut. The most minor of mistakes can inevitably lead to catastrophic turf loss. Throughout Herb's tenure as technician, from 2000 to present, chemical inputs to the property have decreased. Herb understands the importance of his work and its direct effect on other aspects of the entire operation.

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It is easy to conclude that Herb is beyond deserving of nomination. What superintendent would not relish the opportunity to employ Herb Berg? What golf course or country club would not love to retain Herb's relentless work ethic, caring personality, unmatched professionalism, and superb mechanical skill? What operation would not want to employ such a vital asset that can increase efficiency, boost productivity and provide cost-savings? Herb not only satisfies but also exceeds any and all expectations. Herb's body of work is truly unmatched. He feverishly exceeds all of the criteria presented when discussing this esteemed award. On behalf of myself, the grounds department, the management team, Oakmont's Oakmont Country Club, we would like to nominate Herb Berg for the 2009 GCM Most Valuable Technician (MVT) Award. I, as do many others, truly believe, beyond any doubt, that Herb Berg deserves and should be chosen as the Most Valuable Technician (MVT) of the Year. Thank you for your consideration.