



The National Golf Club of Canada

11th Hole, The National.

134 Clubhouse Road,
Woodbridge, Ontario
(905) 851-0461
www.nationalgolf.ca

ABOUT THE COURSE

The National is a George and Tom Fazio masterpiece built in 1974. Chris Dew shares three things that he thinks are fabulous about the course (despite it being as tough as nails!). The separation between holes on only 168 acres; the close proximity between greens and tees (for walkers); and just steps from the front door of the clubhouse, members can access not only the first tee, but the practice tee, the putting green, and the short game area as well.

Private, semi-private, public, municipal, resort? Private

Architect: George and Tom Fazio

Number of holes: 18

Number of rounds annually: 21,000

Practice Facility: Yes

Number of staff year-round/seasonal:
Year-round, nine; seasonal, 24-28.

Number of mechanics & assistants:
Two associate superintendents, one assistant superintendent, one equipment manager, and one assistant equipment manager.

Member since 1983

Chris Dew

Golf Course
Superintendent



Chris Dew

By Chris Lecour, Senior Turf Sales Representative, BASF.

Few Golf Course superintendents have the opportunity to call the #1 ranked golf course in Canada home. It's rarified air and an exclusive club. It is even more special when you consider just how long Chris Dew has managed the grounds at The National Golf Club of Canada. He was hired as superintendent in 1997 and just celebrated his 26th year at The National, a course that is perennially ranked among the Top 5 in Canada, enjoying the #1 ranking on many occasions. Dew was also recently honored by

his peers as he was named the CGSA's 2021 Superintendent of the Year.

Dew began his career in golf course maintenance after a brief stint in the publishing industry, or as he puts it, "my first job was a paper route, but that didn't qualify me for a mortgage, so I moved into Greenkeeping." He realized he was destined for a career in turf management when he knew he wasn't good enough to make a living playing the game but wanted to be involved in the industry in some capacity. Originally from Sarnia, his first job at a golf course was at the Greenwood GC. It was not a love of turf that motivated him to apply at

IN THE HOT SEAT

Q: Favourite Major?

A: The Masters

Q: Best piece of turf equipment?

A: A tie between my paint gun and a Silky pruning hand saw!

Q: Favourite Band?

A: It always seems like it's the last band I've seen in concert...so Fleetwood Mac for now.

Q: Ultimate foursome

A: You and which three? Ackerman, Bartlett, and Scenna!

Q: Lowest round ever and where?

A: One under at the Chippewa Golf Club

Q: Favourite meal?

A: Anything that ends with a brownie, carrot cake or a cream pie!

Q: Favourite movie?

A: A tie between Pulp Fiction, Forrest Gump, Field of Dreams and Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. And who can forget Roadhouse.

Q: Favourite golf course?

A: Not sure if I have found it yet...

Q: Favourite course designer?

A: Tom Fazio

Greenwood, but rather the free golf provided for employees of the club.

Dew attended the University of Guelph's Short Course and upon graduation, moved into a "quasi-assistant" role at the Sarnia GC where he spent two seasons before moving to Weston G&CC as the assistant superintendent under the tutelage of Bob Brewster. He spent seven seasons at Weston, working with both Brewster and Thom Charters. Eventually he moved on to Royal Woodbine during its construction and grow-in. Finally in 1997, he accepted the position of superintendent at the National Golf Club of Canada. As many in the turf industry know, The National is considered one of the most challenging, true tests of golf available in the country; its day-to-day conditioning is well known, and certainly appreciated by its discerning membership who demand the very best.

Dew believes that the key to maintaining a successful relationship with your staff and maximizing their productivity is showing that you care. If anyone understands what makes Dew such an effective leader and turf manager at The National, it's Grant Murphy. The two spent 16 years working



Coolers Open!

together – Murphy serving as the associate superintendent at The National and currently as the superintendent at Barrie CC. Murphy says his partnership with Dew was so successful and lasted so long because both men were able to have fun doing what they love to do. "It was never not cool to be there (at The National). It was always exciting and so much fun to be a part of that operation. Chris provided clear communication and clear expectations

which relieves 95% of the stress in planning."

Murphy also believes Dew's success can be traced to his insatiable curiosity. Refusing to put himself in a box, Dew is generally curious in nature. "Chris reads a lot, is a great conversationalist and listener, and is very genuine. He takes his job very seriously but tends not to take himself seriously at all."

Keith Bartlett, superintendent at Scarborough GC, is a long-time industry colleague and

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Predominate grass type: Bentgrass/Poa Annuua or as our golf broadcasters call it 'Poanna'

Predominant soil type: Clay

Types of greens: California style

Course length: 7330

Size of greens: average size is 5600 sq. ft.

Size of tees: 3 acres

Size of fairways: 22 acres

"Chris Dew is one of the most respected superintendents in all of Canada. In addition to his agronomic prowess, it is common knowledge that Chris has been a great mentor and motivator to many accomplished and budding turf managers. He conducts himself with great integrity and his craftsmanship may be viewed as one of the best in the industry."

– Al Schwemler, OGSA Past President



10th Hole, The National.

friend of Dew's. He is also no stranger to the 'Superintendent-At-The-Best-Golf-Course-In-Canada Club' from his tenure at St. George's G&CC. Bartlett spearheaded Dew's nomination for the CGSA Superintendent of the Year award and says of the process, "as I recall from the submission, I gathered letters from across the industry from GMs, golf pros, golf writers and architects who all, not only commented on his skill as a turf manager but more the person who understood the industry and the game, and prepared the golf course to meet the challenges of member expectations. He is a very good communicator with members especially when there may be minor challenges or to educate the members on projects etc." Bartlett also offered the following lessons he has learned from his friendship with Dew:

1. If you can't do something well, then don't do it. Doing something only partially will be a failure.
2. Think about your actions before doing something. Pause, reflect, then act. This can pertain to people or turf. For example, before you fertilize or water, is it what the turf needs and what is the impact on playability it is not always how it looks but how it plays.

One current employee at The National who offered his perspective on Dew's influence as a leader and superintendent is Tyler Szlea, who shares day-to-day management duties at the club with Stephen Pitkin. Szlea appreciates that Dew is not a micro-manager, but rather hires people to do their job and stays out of their way, serving as a mentor and offering

guidance to employees along the way. "Chris focuses on the big picture at the club," says Szlea. "He is always pushing himself, just like he pushes the turf."

When asked to share some words of wisdom to anyone considering a career in turf or someone who has only recently entered the industry, Chris offers "Be fully engaged in the game, the industry, and the people within it. All while setting yourself apart from others via your work habits, energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity." Dew appreciates and recognizes the contributions of the Turf Department, a true indicator of a strong leader. "Contribution is a good choice of words. And it is a pleasure to see how our team contributes to our experience every day. And it is a gratifying to see and hear how our team integrates within a day's play." ■





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