



Oakdale Golf & Country Club's superintendent Patrick Greenman, his crew and volunteers celebrate Nick Taylor's historic win at the 2023 RBC Canadian Open.

One Team Creating Excellence

THE RBC CANADIAN OPEN

Written by and photos provided by Mark Wiebe, Assistant Superintendent, Oakdale G&CC.

Eagerly awaiting fans crammed the grandstands, and all the standing space in between on that rainy June afternoon. The crowd fell silent. Three playoff holes had already passed. A nervous and excited energy was reaching another climax as Tommy Fleetwood and Nick Taylor played their final hole. Taylor took another look at his putt. Caddy Dave Markle stepped away as Taylor finished lining up the 72-foot, uphill putt that would clinch his historical win at the 2023 RBC Canadian Open at Oakdale Golf and Country Club.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF A GOOD TEAM MOTTO

Five months before that spectacular finish, we were entering what felt like the final laps in our race towards hosting Oakdale's first Canadian Open. On a chilly January morning, senior and middle management from each department had met in the clubhouse. Shelley MacDougall, leadership coach from GGA Partners, had been invited by Molley Jagroop, the general manager at Oakdale Golf and Country Club, to help us understand what makes a good team great, and the type of leadership required to get there.

The opportunity to host the RBC Canadian Open was an extraordinary one, and the team leadership seminar presented both a personal and collective challenge: to lead and to do our individual

parts to ensure a successful tournament and to max-out our team culture potential.

The seminar reminded us all that there wasn't a certain formula to follow. The hard way and the right way continued to be same. Like forming good habits, choosing to have a consistently positive mindset, and embodying the persona of a leader evolves over time and with experience. There's no question, it's hard. It's hard to stay consistently motivated, it's hard to get team buy-in, sometimes it's hard to wake up in the morning.

"How do you want to show up as a leader every day?" MacDougall asked the group. "Think about conscious leadership, purposeful leadership where we're deliberate about how and what we communicate."

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We talked about how consistently fulfilling a leadership role can feel overwhelming yet, for those who want it, the effort tends to provide great fulfillment. We talked about how overwhelming it can be to step into a leadership role, but for those who want it, the effort tends to provide great fulfillment. Patrick Greenman, Oakdale's property director, had already gathered around him a team of people with a range of leadership experience. This level of commitment was something we'd been a part of for some time now, but with the unique opportunity of hosting a national event on the near horizon, we were taking our skills, motivation, and dedication to the next level.

"Success depends on us all working together as a group with no silos," said Jagroop when asked what our new motto meant to her. "Everyone's job is important," she added, "it's the little things that count."

All teams have mottos. Chants. A collective mantra that keeps them going when they need to reinvigorate their mindset. We wanted that. We also wanted something easy to remember. We discussed the vision, mission, and values tied to Oakdale and this event, and finally the last suggestion summed it up perfectly. "How about, 'One team creating excellence'?"

Our new motto, the words we'd say and embody for the next five months and beyond, had been decided on.

As always, April is the most important time with orientations and on-boarding, but this year, it had never been more crucial. New and returning staff got a first taste of what was to come for the next several months leading up to the RBC Canadian Open. The onboarding included in-depth orientations for new and returning staff, as well as a new training regimen with introductory, in-class sessions to get people more comfortable with the job before on-course or practical training began.

"ONE TEAM CREATING EXCELLENCE"

We opened each orientation with our new motto and discussed what it meant. It starts when members and guests arrive through the front gate; as a team, we're creating an experience and, more so in our case, delivering a product (the golf course) that in every way embodies excellence. We also made a new-hire team manual. It contained information to help reinforce what it means to be a good team member, with some basic golf course and team principles, as well as property and individual hole maps, emergency procedures,

and guidelines on greenkeeping. It all aligned well with our new motto. In a short time, we built a strong team foundation with credibility, respect, and trust. We were working toward a common goal.

It didn't take long to see the new motto come to life in other ways; leaders emerged amongst both the staff and management team. The extraordinary began to take shape. The golf course conditions, and the turf team culture were on an upward trajectory.

The excitement, nervousness, positivity, and negativity always seem to exist together in an individual or group, especially with so much on the line. These emotions can be used as fuel to either benefit or cause detriment to an individual or group. It's imperative for everyone, especially leaders, to consistently commit to a positive group effort, or buy in, for everyone to overcome this natural or human condition.

We found one of the best antidotes to combat the excitement and nerves, being proactive. And, when the work was done for the day, a plan was made for the next day's work, and the day after that, and the day after that, and so on. We imagined the best scenario and planned for the worst. Consciously, each of us continued to buy in. And, when

"Consistency was key to our success, breaking everything down into manageable parts to work through any challenges that arose."

Patrick Greenman, Property Director, Oakdale G&CC



Leadership team members of the Oakdale Turf Department: (L - R) Second Assistant, Devan Kennedy, Assistant Superintendent, Mark Wiebe, Director of Property, Patrick Greenman, Assistant Superintendent, Mike Jackson and Administrative Assistant, Marianne Beaubien.

there were days that felt like there was a lack of commitment to one team creating excellence, we remembered our motto, and adjusted.

BEFORE WE KNEW IT, JUNE WAS UPON US

PGA Agronomist, PJ Ringenberger, who had been there since the previous year to help guide us on our journey, joined us for advanced week and the week of the tournament. Aside from the invaluable agronomic and general advice linked to the physical golf course, he exemplified conscious leadership and provided a personable and motivating attitude that boosted morale and helped to keep people engaged. When asked what his favorite part of his job was, Ringenberger answered, "The people. Working with and getting to know all the different people is always very rewarding."

We were in the homestretch, and during the week of the Open, a lot of the turf team, including myself, chose to sleep on-site. A small RV park assembled in the shop yard complete with camping chairs

Taylor and Fleetwood play their last strokes, a small and very fortunate touch-up crew ended up over the ropes and beside the green for those last surreal moments, after raking the bunkers and blowing the green on the 18th.

We had worked hard for months. The adrenaline was pumping, our nerves were tingling. Watching that last putt drop into the hole was unbelievable. With our arms raised, we joined the crowd's roar which replaced the silence...it was over. We all felt like we'd won; along with Taylor and his caddy Markle, we too felt the glory.

"You did pretty good...for a bunch of rookies," Ringenberger said jokingly near the end of our post-tournament interview. He was right. With all the extra excitement and nervousness, the heightened expectations and standards coming to an end, we felt a great fulfillment.

With our first win at the 2023 RBC Canadian Open in the history books, we continue to go back to our motto every day, "One Team Creating Excellence." Hard to do, easy to remember, worth the effort. ■



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surrounding a firepit, and the team camaraderie continued. The standard two-and-a-half-hours sleep and hour-long nap between the morning and evening shifts took its toll, but we all fed off the same energy and hype of the moment to keep afloat and focused. Volunteers from all over Ontario, the rest of Canada, and even one extraordinary gentleman from Tasmania, came to help. We were all dedicated to delivering excellence, and we had a lot of fun along the way.

Those final holes felt like a playoff for the turf team at Oakdale Golf and Country Club too. Although some of the team chose to forego the crowds, and instead huddle around the shop TV to watch