



Magna Golf Club

14780 Leslie Street
Aurora, Ontario L4G 7C3

(905) 726-7650

www.magnagolf.com

Fescue Showing well on #14

Member since 1983

Wayne Rath

Superintendent,
Magna Golf Club.



Wayne Rath, superintendent at Magna Golf Club.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Located in Aurora, Ontario, on part of the Oak Ridges moraine, it is the original horse farm of the Stronach family. The vision was a high-end private golf club of Mr. Frank Stronach. The Golf Course was originally owned by Magna International as part of their Magna Entertainment division, which included Horse Racetrack and Gaming Operations. The Golf Course has since sold to Trillyan Investment; however, it continues to operate under its original membership concept. The club has 275 members. The club strives to offer the ultimate golf and social experience while at the club.

Architect: Doug Carrick

Type of Club: Private membership

Number of holes: 18

Number of rounds annually: 15,000

Practice Facility: Yes, with a tee at each end, with target greens, chipping area and practice bunkers.

Number of staff year-round/seasonal:
46 at peak season

By Marco China, Director of Turfgrass Operations, Deer Ridge Golf Club.

The word “passion” comes to mind when talking about our industry and all those who are involved in it. It’s that passion for the game and for the job that keeps many of us going through those long stretches of the summer grind. For many of us, it’s the passion for the game of golf that ultimately led us to our passion for turf management, inspiring others to follow a similar path.

When speaking with Wayne Rath, superintendent at Magna Golf Club in Aurora, one can hear the passion in his voice

when he talks about turf, a topic he loves to discuss with his staff. This inspired passion has driven many who have worked for him to go on and be successful on their own paths: “I love working with young people who want to do this for a living and mentoring them,” says Wayne. His journey is filled with mentors who guided him and gave him the chance to learn and grow.

For Wayne, the journey started at Victoria Park in Guelph, where he often hung around trying to hone his golf game to reach the pro level. He even took a job picking balls on the range so he could be there more often. It was Carmen DeCorso who offered him a job on

IN THE HOT SEAT

Q: Favourite golf tournament?

A: US Open.

Q: Favourite piece of turf equipment?

A: Toro HydroJect, Smithco Sprayer.

Q: Favourite golf course?

A: Cypress Point.

Q: Ultimate foursome?

A: Paul Dermott, Thom Charters, and Bill Fach

Q: Lowest round and where?

A: 66 - Islington Golf Club.

Q: Favourite Meal?

A: Carrie's homemade lobster mac and cheese.

Q: Favourite Movie?

A: Caddyshack

Q: Favourite Season?

A: Fall

Q: Favourite Band?

A: Gino Vanelli - Black Cars.

the grounds crew when he was 14 years old. During this time, Wayne attended school for mechanical engineering, but his passion for golf remained the focus. Realizing that a pro golf career might not be attainable, DeCorso encouraged him to take the 2-year turf management program at Seneca College in 1984. After graduating, DeCorso let Wayne operate Victoria Park West course for a year before accepting his first superintendent role at Guelph Country Club at 22 years old.

After a season at Guelph Country Club, he sought more knowledge and applied for the assistant superintendent role at Credit Valley Golf and Country Club. Under the guidance of Doug Sutor, Wayne began to refine his skills and see things differently. This was



Wayne and Carrie with their dog Sailor, daughter Sarah with spouse Robert and granddaughter Georgia with their dog Winnie, Son Mitchell with his girlfriend Grace.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Predominate grass type: Greens, Tees and Fairways are Providence /SR 1119 Blend

Predominant soil type: Sandy loam on our south side / Heavier soil on the North part of the property

Types of greens: Modified California free drain greens with Hutcheson Sand Mix

Course Length: Six sets of tees ranging from 5108 yds. to 7307 yds. from the back tees

Size of Property: 200 acres

Size of Greens: 130,000 sq. ft

Size of Tees: 155,000 sq. ft

Size of Fairways: 31.5 acres

Major Challenges: Aging infrastructure, particularly Sand traps, Irrigation Upgrades and Cart Path Replacement. Managing almost 9 acres of original bunkers, major washouts are becoming a major concern.

where he learned the importance of nitrogen management. He recalls when Credit Valley purchased one of the first fleets of triplex mowers with buckets to collect clippings: "We were only getting through about half a pass before we had to dump the buckets! This was where I realized we needed to

control nitrogen; in those days, we were just throwing it down by the skid". Times have certainly changed, but that story has followed him throughout his career as he became a leader in bentgrass management.

After two years at Credit Valley, learning from

"I have been fortunate to know Wayne for over 30 years. He is a great leader and mentor but is an even better friend. Wayne's agronomic knowledge is on the cutting edge and he is always improving his skills through education and research. Wayne is on the forefront of turf management and is respected by Superintendents across Canada."

– Ian McQueen, Golf Course and Property Manager
St. George's Golf and Country Club



Brooke Henderson walking up 18th fairway at the 2019 CP Women's Open.

Sutor, he moved on to the superintendent job at Islington Golf Club at age 24. He spent ten years at Islington from 1988 to 1998, where mentoring and teaching others became a passion for him: "I have always enjoyed teaching and learning. Some people came with experience, and you knew they were going to be great. Others came in and learned the skills, showing interest, and we would give them opportunities to show their skills, helping everyone along the way".

During his time at Islington, he met another pivotal figure in his journey: Canadian golf course architect Doug Carrick, who gave him the opportunity to consult on many projects putting together the maintenance protocols for many of Carrick's projects. One of these projects was Magna Golf Club. In 1998, Wayne took the position of superintendent at Magna Golf Club, where he oversaw the construction and grow-in of one of Canada's finest courses. He has continued to push the limits of championship golf conditioning at Magna for over 25 years.

Wayne credits much of his success to the unwavering support of his family. "During the first year at Islington I worked everyday, my wife Carrie would jokingly say no plans were final until Wayne got there", Wayne said, "my family knew what I did and supported it, we became a skiing family because it worked for us". Wayne said things have changed since those early days, and he has achieved a greater balance between work and life but has always known that he has the support of his entire family.

When asked what has kept him interested and motivated throughout the years, Wayne

says that "ultimately, I am a lover of growing grass; that's where my passion is. Growing grass has changed a lot over the past 30 years. We do things differently now, and I enjoy being creative in how we deliver championship conditions every day". In 2000, Wayne's greens at Magna won the best 18 greens in North America by Seed Research. It was from here that he got involved with the bentgrass advisory committee with Seed Research and surrounded himself with others – from doctorate professors to agronomists to other superintendents – who share his passion for growing grass. This passion for growing grass led him to start Turfgrass Solutions seven years ago. Turfgrass Solutions offers alternative fertilizer options that are not nitrogen-based, bringing it back to that lesson learned long ago at Credit Valley. Wayne takes pride in receiving calls from other superintendents seeking advice or help with their fertilizer programs, offering cost-effective solutions for their turf: "It has been a great learning experience for me and has exceeded our expectations".

When writing about Wayne, you can't overlook the fact that he has mentored and taught many individuals throughout his career. So many, in fact, that listing them all would take up several pages of this magazine. This is a testament to his passion for the industry and the people who make it what it is: "I have always enjoyed the people. I am out in the field every day with the staff, talking to them and learning about their lives". He has always believed in having a wide range of ages on staff, with team members ranging from teenagers to those in their 70's. It's clear that everyone is given the opportunity to shine

when working with Wayne; your skills are put to the test, but not before you learn them.

Networking is a common theme that many longtime superintendents will tell you is extremely important: "Don't be afraid to network, people are always open to questions in our industry, very rarely will people not answer the phone, talking and asking questions is a huge resource to use in our industry" says Wayne. Wayne said he doesn't play in as many industry golf tournaments anymore but always enjoyed playing golf with industry colleagues: "Make time to be at events and the opportunities that are given to you by the industry". He stated that it was at these events where he met some of the most influential people in his career.

When finishing my conversation with Wayne, I asked him if he had any words of wisdom he could share with me. He quickly remarked "I am a big believer in that good people get what they deserve, work hard and surround yourself with good people you can learn from". It is clear that Wayne's journey is defined by passion, hard work, and the strong relationships he has built along the way, and these are lessons from which we can all learn from a true mentor. ■



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