



My Time at the Canadian Open

Written by James Connor, Assistant Superintendent, Caledon Woods GC

It was a blustery January day when I was working through the leadership module of the GCSAA's Assistant Superintendent Certification Series. I noticed that one of the options for involvement was volunteering at an event.

"Why not?" I thought. It had been nearly a decade since I last worked the Canadian Open, and I could use the experience to reinvigorate my love for turf. My last Open was in 2015 at Glen Abbey where I was on the bunker crew. I had a great time working with fellow turf professionals and making memories.

MONDAY, JUNE 2

I arrived early—an hour ahead of schedule. I was buzzing with excitement, eager to see what my tasks for the week would be. As time passed, the lunchroom filled with Osprey staff and fellow volunteers—some familiar faces, and some new. The energy in the room was electric. At 4 a.m., our morning meeting began with a few quick words from the superintendent Dave Hunter, then we got down to business.

I spoke with Dave later that week and asked about his favourite part of the tournament. Without hesitation, he said it was the morning meetings: feeling the excitement in the air and having the full attention of the entire team.

ORGANIZATION ON ANOTHER LEVEL

From that very first meeting, I knew exactly what my responsibilities were, what cart to use, and where to begin. As we walked out of the shop, we were greeted by The Flight of the Valkyries playing through the speakers—a daily ritual to hype us up for the day ahead.

My assignment was dew removal—specifically, clearing dew from the walking paths between the tee decks and fairways. Before we got started though, we had to wait out a frost delay (the perennial nemesis of every superintendent). During the wait, I had a chance to chat with the fairway operators. They're usually split among the three Osprey Valley courses, so they enjoyed the rare opportunity to work together as a team.

Once the frost cleared, it was off to the races. My task, while not glamorous, was one of those small touches that makes a big difference for the professionals. After finishing the back nine dew removal, we moved over to prep the Hootlands for players and spectators. The idea was brilliant: play 18 holes—nine on the Heathlands, nine on the Hoot—and then spend the rest of the day watching the Open.

FUEL FOR THE CREW

With morning work wrapped up, it was time for breakfast—generously donated by industry suppliers and catered by a local company. We never went hungry. Eggs Benedict, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes, waffles—you name it. Every day, boxes of bananas and apples would arrive. By Sunday, the office looked like a grocery store with fruit piled high. Dinner for those on evening shifts was equally delicious—chicken parm, roast beef, pasta, pies—and there was no shortage of cold water or Gatorade.

EVENING SHIFTS AND SHARED STORIES

Evening duties included watering bunkers, filling fairway divots, mowing intermediate rough, fluffing around green complexes, and collecting moisture and firmness data from the greens. I was on divot duty, which turned out to be a great opportunity to chat with turf workers from across Ontario. No matter how different our courses back home were, we all shared a passion for working outdoors and a commitment to quality.

Of course, not everything went to plan. On Wednesday afternoon, a brief but intense downpour with high winds forced the evacuation of a broadcaster's booth. While the North Course escaped with minimal damage, some practice rounds had to be cut short. The Heathlands bore the brunt of the storm, with its many weeping willows leaving debris everywhere. Fortunately, manpower wasn't an issue. The entire crew pulled together, and everything was cleaned up in time for the next morning's Hootlands tournament.



RAISE THE STANDARD.
ELEVATE THE EXPERIENCE.

From bunker upgrades to full course rebuilds, Ontario's top clubs trust FlightLine Golf for precision renovations with minimal disruption. We deliver the craftsmanship, precision, and aesthetics that make your course shine—so it doesn't just look better, it plays better.

Let's talk about your next project.
Visit flightlinegolf.com or call **519.725.0111**

FLIGHTLINE
GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION

ELEVATE YOUR GAME



pumps plus

Now Part of the Turf Care Group of Companies

Let us show you an easy and affordable path to the latest in pump technology. Finance from as low as \$2,485/month

Pump Station Sales | Installation | Service

WATERTRONICS

MCI FLOWTRONEX

T TURF CARE 50 Proudly Canadian since 1975

Contact your Pumps Representative
kory.kopko@turfcare.ca | 343-550-7354
turfcare.ca

@GrBestShowOnTRF @TurfCareProdCA



THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

What really stood out during my time at Osprey Valley was the shared commitment to excellence. Every person I met was focused on the same goal: making the course the absolute best it could be. Tasks were tackled with attention to detail and pride. One of the bunker crew leaders had only been on the team for a month, but didn't hesitate to tell even seasoned workers, "That's not good enough," when a bunker needed to be re-raked or a line straightened.

Everyone understood – we were preparing the best possible conditions for Canada's national golf championship.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible leadership team at Osprey. They were welcoming, organized, and always ready to answer questions or lend a hand.

WHY YOU SHOULD VOLUNTEER

Some of my staff asked why I'd take time away from my home course to volunteer. Everyone has their own reasons—but for me, it was about perspective. I got to see the course from a vantage point usually reserved for the players themselves. I stood on the 14th tee—The Rink—when it was completely silent in the early morning, knowing that in just a few hours it would be packed with fans, banging on the boards and belting out O Canada for the Canadian golfers.

I had the chance to be part of a massive, finely tuned operation that culminates in crowning the national champion of Canadian golf. Sure, I missed my home course—and I definitely missed my own bed—but given the chance, I'd do it all over again in a heartbeat. ■

CONTROLLED-RELEASE FERTILIZER YOU CAN COUNT ON.

PREDICTABLE
Using our proprietary POLYGRAPH® software, your Harrell's Golf Specialist can help you dial in just the right prescription for your turf's POLYON® controlled-release fertilizer needs.

DURABLE
POLYON® fertilizer's original reactive layers coating process creates a durable, uniform adhesion between the polymer coating and the heated urea substrate.

For more information about POLYON® Fertilizer and the POLYON® Guarantee, visit nutrite.com and oscturf.com
 Nutrite Toll Free 1-800-265-8865
 OSC Toll Free 1-800-465-5849
 Contact your OSC or Nutrite Sales representative today!

RELIABLE SPACE
POLYON® fertilizer's durable prill preserves the nutrients within the substrate and ensures a proper rate of release, providing consistent greening all season long.

SUSTAINABLE
POLYON® fertilizer offers a reduced environmental impact. With more efficient nutrient uptake, significantly less environmental loss and fewer applications required, you get more with less!

THE ORIGINAL REACTIVE LAYERS COATING

Providing consistent, reliable predictable results for 30 years

A cross-section of POLYON® 41-0-0 prill with polymer coating adhered to urea substrate