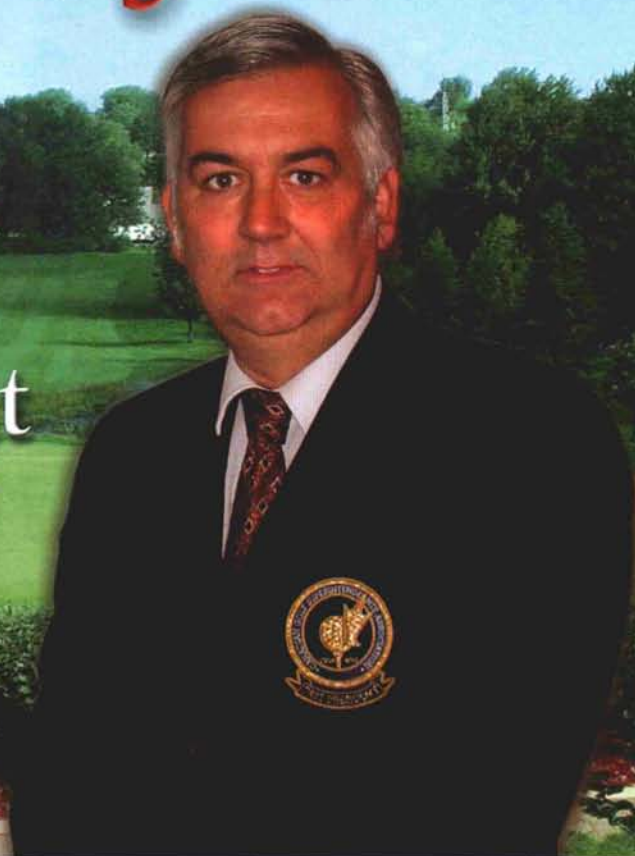


# Meet Doug Meyer

## Superintendent of the Year

Photos courtesy Doug Meyer



By Lori Suffern

**B**eaconsfield Golf Club in Pointe-Claire, Que., 35 km (22 mi.) west of Montreal, has the distinction of being the oldest private golf club still located on its original site. And so it only seems fitting that on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the man who has spearheaded many of the course's renovations in recent years has been awarded the industry's highest honour—Superintendent of the Year.

Yet, for Doug Meyer, the accolades, while humbling, are all par for the course, so to speak. Indeed, one needs to look no further than the course itself to see the culmination of Meyer's love for the game of golf and the turf maintenance profession translate into conditions that rival some of the country's most famed golf courses, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

With Beaconsfield hosting several of its own centennial events, not to mention the Canadian Amateur Championship this past August, the course has been in the spotlight almost since the snow melted.

You could probably say Meyer's love of the land led him to his stellar career in golf course management. Born in Lachute, Que., in 1951, Meyer was raised on his parent's dairy farm. From a very early age, his father involved him in the daily farm operations, a fact he believes helped foster his agricultural inclinations. As a

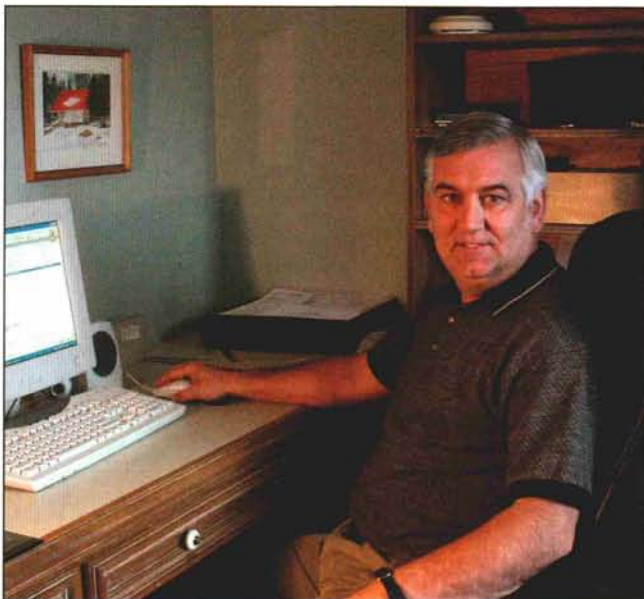
teenager, Meyer was also influenced heavily by his two brothers-in-law, who were both in the golf business. During this time, he worked for superintendent Tom Johnson at Carling Lake Golf Club, not far from Lachute. After two seasons, Meyer was hooked—he wanted to be a golf course superintendent.

He attended the University of Guelph from 1970 to 1972, studying turf management and spending his summers working at the neighbouring Cutten Club under the watchful eye of superintendent Richard Creed. From there, he spent two years as a research technician with the University of Guelph studying the effects of herbicides and fungicides on turfgrass.

Eager to return to the golf course maintenance profession, in 1975 Meyer accepted a superintendent position at Cedarbrook Golf Club in Ste. Sophie, Que.—a post he held for 24 years.

In 1999, Cedarbrook was sold to ClubLink Corporation. Meyer stayed on and spent two years as the regional superintendent for Quebec. His job was to oversee turf operations at Cedarbrook and Quatre Domaines in Mirabel; the construction of Le Maitre Golf Club in Mont Tremblant; and the preliminary work for the construction of Le Fontainebleau Golf Club in Blainville.

However, in 2001, Meyer's hands-on approach to turf management would lead him to accept his current position at Beaconsfield.



When he is not out on the golf course, superintendent Doug Meyer can be found in his office catching up on paperwork, returning phone calls and answering e-mails.



While keeping the Beaconsfield Golf Course in pristine condition is the responsibility of the superintendent, it's a job that could not be accomplished without the hard work of a dedicated team.

An avid golfer, Meyer's dedication to golf and turf management doesn't stop at the clubhouse. Rather, he has been almost as active off the course as he has on it. He is a long-standing member of the Quebec Golf Superintendents

Association (QGSA), serving as QGSA president in 1984-85. To this day, he remains an active board member.

In 1991, Meyer was named Quebec director of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) and would go on to serve as president in 1998. He is also a member of the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association (OGSA) and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

On the eve of being named 2004 Superintendent of the Year, *GreenMaster* sat down with Meyer to talk about his remarkable career, his future ambitions and what he feels is the future of the golf course superintendent.

**GM.** What do you consider your most satisfying accomplishments as a golf course superintendent?

**DM.** I can think of several—certainly hosting the Canadian Amateur Championship while at the same time celebrating Beaconsfield's centennial year has been a high point. The course was in great shape during the tournament and it challenged Canada's best amateur players.


Another accomplishment I am very proud of is being involved in the creation of Le Maitre Golf Club in St. Jovite with ClubLink's Jim Molenhuis and Darrell Huxham. It was a rewarding experience to work with a group of professionals from the conception to the opening of a world-class golf course.

**GM.** Which one task do you enjoy most as a golf course superintendent?


**DM.** As with many superintendents, my early morning inspection of the course is a special time. The quiet of the morning, with the sun rising and the birds and animals stirring, provides me with a moment of reflection before the tasks of the day begin. As far as larger tasks go, I have enjoyed the challenge of bringing a historic course like Beaconsfield back to its former glory over the last three years.

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**GM.** Which one task do you least enjoy as a golf course superintendent?

**DM.** Cleaning up after vandals is frustrating and discouraging. Beaconsfield is an urban course, subject to periodic episodes of mindless destruction by young people. It's tough to see our hard work destroyed overnight. In fact, we have resorted to employing night security to reduce these incidents.

**GM.** In what ways have you seen the role of golf course superintendent change over the years?

**DM.** In the 30 years I have been a superintendent, the role of turf manager has become more science based. The use of computers for record keeping and research, precision in plant nutrition and irrigation and advancements in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies have meant that today's superintendent must be highly educated in more areas of turf management than ever before. I believe a lifetime of continuing education is the way to keep up with new research and product evolution.

**GM.** Who has had the biggest influence on your career?

**DM.** I would have to say my wife Lynn has had a huge influence. We have worked side by side for 30 years. Lynn handles the paperwork side of my job, which frees me to spend more time on the course where I can be most effective. Also, by being involved in the business, she understands the day-to-day happenings on the course and can appreciate my joys and frustrations.

However, my biggest influence in choosing to become a superintendent back in the late '60s was Butch Middleton.



Beaconsfield Golf Club has the distinction of being the oldest private golf club still located on its original site. And it's conditions like this that have earned Doug Meyer accolades from both golfers and his peers.

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He suggested I attend the University of Guelph and take an associate diploma course. It was a decision I have never regretted.

**GM.** Are there any major accomplishments you would still like to achieve as a superintendent?

**DM.** I would like to complete a bachelor's degree in chemistry. I feel a greater understanding of the interaction between soil and water would be a great asset in managing turf.

I would also like to become a Master Greenkeeper in the UK. I presently hold both Master Superintendent and Certified Golf Course Superintendent status, but I would like to receive the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) certificate as well.

**GM.** What are some of your personal aspirations and goals as a superintendent?

**DM.** At this point in my career, I have accomplished many of the goals I set when I first became a superintendent. Now I am focusing on mentoring young people in the business. Currently, I have three members of my staff that are pursuing an associate diploma in turfgrass management at the University of Guelph, including my son, David.

**GM.** How do you feel the role of the golf course superintendent could be improved?

**DM.** I think we have come a long way in promoting the role of superintendents as professionals, but we still have a long way to go to increase the public's perception of the complexities of our role as turf managers—we don't just mow grass. Maybe the

public would have more confidence in our safe use of pesticides if they realized our level of education and knowledge.

**GM.** Would you say the role of the golf course superintendent is demanding in terms of family life?

**DM.** Yes. When my children were young it was difficult to be with them as much as I would have liked during the summer months. However, during their teenage years, both my daughter and son worked on the golf course and it became a 'family' business. Of course, this is not the norm and I am sure many superintendents find it difficult to juggle the demands and long hours of this career with family life.

**GM.** Would you recommend the career of golf course superintendent to a younger person? Why or why not?

**DM.** Yes. In spite of the long hours and many demands of the job, I still feel the career of golf course superintendent is a good one. A sound education is a must for anyone considering the field. I feel the profession is demanding, but one that can be very rewarding.

**GM.** Do you feel superintendents are appreciated for their efforts?

**DM.** Superintendents are appreciated when conditions are good, but not when Mother Nature doesn't co-operate. I feel most golfers do not appreciate the complexities of the job and can be unforgiving when forces beyond our control make course conditions less than ideal.

**GM.** How has being a member of CGSA helped you in your career?

**DM.** Being a member of the CGSA for nearly 30 years, as well as

being on the board of directors and serving as president, has given me great opportunities to meet and network with fellow superintendents from across the country. In addition, the CGSA has provided me with excellent educational opportunities. I have taken advantage of CGSA seminars every year and the Environmental Management Resource Manual<sup>®</sup> has been a great tool to help with environmental issues.

**GM.** What changes would you like to see in the association?

**DM.** I think the CGSA is doing a great job. By working together with provincial associations, our conferences just keep getting better. The IPM accreditation program is something I would like to see expanded nationally.

**GM.** What do you hope to be doing five years from now?

**DM.** Life is good. In five years I hope to be doing exactly what I am doing today.

**GM.** Do you have any unusual or humorous anecdotes about your career?

**DM.** During my tenure as president of CGSA, Pelino Scenna attempted to teach me to arrange my tie properly for board meetings. Pelino is a perfectionist in such matters and I was never able to completely satisfy his demands! Dean Piller, on the other hand, always took care to make sure my shoes were well polished. So, the past-president and the incoming president took care of me from top to bottom. Thanks guys for helping me polish my image. ♫

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