

From The Editor

Mike Jiggins

Saluting industry's top women leaders

By sheer coincidence, this issue includes a couple of features that profile two prominent women in the professional turfgrass industry in Canada. One is an up-and-coming young golf superintendent who was the lone woman to crack Turf & Rec's inaugural Top 10 Under 40 list in the spring, while the other has recently retired from a career that spanned four decades during which time she was a pioneer among women in helping superintendents across Canada solve a number of disease setbacks on their golf courses.

To those outside the industry, it might not seem like such a big deal to have stories published about a pair of women whose careers are tied to the upkeep of turfgrass. But among those employed in the industry and who read this magazine, it's common knowledge that women occupy only a fraction of the industry's workforce.

Having these two women – one representing the industry's past and the other the future, if you will – featured in the same issue is a big deal.

Our cover feature is a reflection of the recent volunteer experience of Pheasant Run Golf Club superintendent Leasha Schwab at the 100th PGA Championship, played at the Bellerive Golf Club in St. Louis. Without spoiling the story, let's just say that a fortuitous meeting with Bellerive's superintendent occurred months earlier, precipitating a series of events where Schwab's experience, personality and leadership skills kicked into high gear.

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The other woman featured in this issue is someone renowned from coast to coast in the golf world. Marie Thorne's career in the chemical business began in the early 1980s, and she has left her mark in the industry as one of the most influential women who has worked in turf. She retired from Syngenta Canada this past July.

I originally met Leasha about five years ago when she was superintendent at Foxbridge Golf Club in Uxbridge, Ont., and could sense then that she was destined for greater things even while she was still in her early 20s. Having met up with her again late this summer and seeing the way she interacted with her staff only solidified my earlier convictions of her. I could clearly see she had her male-dominant staff's full respect. That usually comes from leading by example and having the right people skills.

I, therefore, wasn't the least bit surprised when she was named to Turf & Rec's inaugural Top 10 Under 40 list. She is also only one of two people in the history of this publication to be featured twice on the cover.

As for Marie Thorne, I've known her for as long as I've been working for Turf & Rec. She had already been working in the turfgrass industry for more than a decade at the time, and

I'm less than a year away from reaching the quarter-century mark with Turf & Rec.

Our paths have crossed in several Canadian provinces and at a multitude of events, including an Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation fundraising golf tournament where she and her playing partners made history by becoming the first ever all-female foursome to play together at the National Golf Club of Canada.

I suspect Marie's departure from the turf world won't be an entirely easy one. She said she'd like to focus on improving her golf game in retirement, but added it will be difficult not to make mental notes about imperfections she may spot on the golf course when she's supposed to be concentrating on how her putt is going to break.

Travel is a part of her retirement plans as well with England being one of her targeted destinations. One thing that has always fascinated her about England, and Europe in general, is the professional darts tour, and being part of the live audience might be fun, she said. Darts fans are a spirited bunch and would fit in well with the studio audiences at tapings of Let's Make a Deal or those attending a lavish Halloween party.

Somehow I can't picture Marie dressed as Ronald Mc-Donald or one of the Teletubbies.