

GC HIGHLIGHT | MEMBER PROFILE

Piper's Heath Golf Club

The sun rising over the 15th hole at Piper's Heath.

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Member Since 2000

Tim Muys

Superintendent

By: Ryan Scott, superintendent at Oakville Golf Club, OGSA Vice-president.

Photos provided by Tim Muys.

About the Course

Piper's Heath is a stunning 18-hole championship course designed by renowned golf course architect Graham Cooke.

Architect: Graham Cooke

Type of Club: Private

Number of Holes: 18

Number of Rounds Annually: Since Covid 37,000

Practice Facility: Yes

Number of staff year-round, seasonal?: 4 all season and 20 for peak. One mechanic, Shawn Palmer, and two crew leaders.

Major Challenges

Heavy soils and lots of rounds.

When you first meet Tim Muys, you notice that he would make a great poker player. With a calm and aplomb demeanor, he keeps his cards close to his chest; he's a tough nut to crack. After getting to know Tim over the years working on the OGSA board together, I would also add professional, accommodating, and sharp as a tack. When I signed-up to write his profile, I started to find out more about this organization's past president of 2020 and my mind was blown when I found out this quiet and reserved person's favourite band is the Beastie Boys. It's hard for me to imagine Tim driving home after a long day on the course, rocking out to the Beastie's 'Check Your Head.'

Tim's 20 years as a golf course superintendent started back in the fall of 1990 with his brother Steve. He was 15 years old when Steve, who at that time was



Tim Muys, Superintendent at Piper's Heath Golf Club and OGSA Past President.

the assistant super at Heron Point Golf Links, now the superintendent at Twenty Valley Golf Club, recruited him to help out on weekends. Tim decided after working on the golf course for a few years, that this is what he wanted to do for a living. He graduated from the University of Guelph's Horticulture Diploma OAC program in 1997 and would eventually work his way up the ranks to assistant superintendent at

In the Hot Seat

Q: Lowest round ever and where?

A: 37 at my neighborhood course, Rock Chapel

Q: Favourite Piece of Equipment?

A: Verti-drain and my utility vehicle I use to get around to every inch of the course

Q: Favourite Major?

A: US Open

Q: Ultimate Foursome?

A: Me and my three brothers

Q: Favourite movie?

A: Fight Club

Q: Favourite meal?

A: Homemade pizza

Q: Favourite golf course?

A: Fairmont Le Chateau Montebello Golf Club

Q: Favourite Band?

A: Beastie Boys

Heron Point as his brother moved on to another Clublink property.

In 2002, Tim received a phone call from Gord Forth, a member at Heron Point. He had plans to build a golf course on 200 acres of a broccoli farm, to be named Copetown Woods Golf Club. He was invited to interview for the superintendent position, as Mr. Forth recognized Tim's work ethic and dedication to Heron Point. After the interviewing process, he was offered the position to grow-in the golf course. With that, at the age of 26, Tim was about to embark on a journey of unknown challenges and success. "It was a daunting task," he said, "but I enjoyed the challenge, so much so that when the opportunity came up to do another grow-in at Piper's Heath in 2006, I jumped at the chance."

Piper's Heath Golf Club is a Graham Cooke Heathlands design in the Halton region of Ontario. The course is built on heavy soils which turned out to be just one of the many challenges to this grow-in. The property was seeded wall to wall, which Tim has attested to be one of the reasons he has been so successful providing great playing conditions over the years. During our discussion about the grow-in, he mentioned the use of over-seeding his rough and fescue areas with oats. "It proved to be a great 'nurse



(L-R) Tim Muys and team member on 1 out of 9 oak bridges the team built during construction of Piper's Heath GC.

grass' which also help with erosion control."

Even with all the challenges and ebbs and flows a grow-in provides, the difficult, hair pulling moments seem a distant memory.

The moments of success and triumph is what is most remembered now, which provides that feeling of pride, appreciation, and accomplishment. When asked if he

What You Need to Know

Grass: Bentgrass

Predominant soil type: Clay

Types of greens: USGA

Course Length: 7,017 yards

Size of greens: 120,000

Size of tees: 120,000

Size of fairways: 30 acres

"Growing up, our father always required our help on the farm and instilled a strong work ethic upon us. Tim has always insisted on doing the job correctly and to the best possible standard; no short cuts, no matter how much extra effort it would take. He believes in hard work that begins with himself. Tim is a leader. He believes in his values, and he will stand up for them. Having Tim as a brother and colleague has been great; we often enjoy conversations about what we are both dealing with, and bounce ideas off each other. In Tim's off time, he can be found doing something on his property, working in his gardens, maintaining the bees, or making maple syrup. Tim is always on the go."

– Steve Muys, Brother and Superintendent,
Twenty Valley Golf Club.



Hole #3 approaching the green (par 5).

would do another one, Tim said yes, as it really is a worthwhile experience.

Tim prides himself as a manager in maintaining a healthy relationship with his staff and making sure they have the opportunity to enjoy a work/life balance. He is always quick to give credit where credit is due and recognizes the efforts and abilities from his staff by rewarding them with team BBQ's and allowing flexibility in their schedules to enjoy life outside of work. "We have an amazing team; they all have a clear sense of purpose and a desire to do their fair share."

Michael Greger, M.D. authored a book called *How Not to Die*, a book that Tim highly recommends as an approach to a healthier diet and lifestyle. This is a philosophy Tim takes very seriously, applying it to his personal life and wellbeing and brings it with him to the golf course as well. Through his years at Piper's Heath, Tim has embraced the 'KISS' method in his agronomic management. Simplifying and adopting a more biological approach to turf management, he has been able to maintain his playing surfaces at a high level while dramatically reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers and chemicals. He doesn't seem to get caught up in the marketing of certain products or practices, as he finds himself doing his own research and digging deeper on certain products and/or methods of approach. He forges his own solutions that help him produce excellent playing conditions.

While not on the course, Tim enjoys spending time with his wife, Michelle, and their three dogs hiking around their 18-acre property. It's their time to recharge,

reconnect, and reflect on their own work/life balance. During the maple syrup season, once the sap starts running, you will find Tim in his sugar shack boiling down the sap he has collected from his Sugar Maple grove. He has grown his operation from manually hauling pails of sap and boiling it down in turkey pots to having linked lines from tree to tree to a proper evaporator. He says it's very time consuming, but it is a labour of love where he has the chance to mentally prepare for another season on the golf course.

Through our conversations over the years, I have found his proficiency and perception about turf management to be clever and insightful, and I for one have been



(L-R) Tim & his wife Michelle.

impressed by his knowledge and ambition to always seek a better way to grow grass. Over his career, Tim has been able to mold himself into the epitome of a well-rounded superintendent: a hardworking, determined, flexible, lead-by-example kind of manager that holds not only his staff to high standards, but himself as well. He credits his many successes to having a supportive wife, who "has given up her mornings, weekends, and summer vacations" to be with Tim, while provides the attention and detail needed to be successful in the fast paced, high stress industry. For Tim, this Henry David Thoreau quote, is one he finds has great meaning: "The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it." ■

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