



Episode 07

The sky is the limit

Mar 31, 2023

Podcast Transcript

Music Intro

Sara: Hi, and welcome. This is Dr. Sara Stricker from the Guelph Turfgrass Institute, and we are starting up season two of Canadian Turf Talks. This podcast aims to showcase the diversity of different types of careers in the turf grass industry in Canada and also to share some nuggets of wisdom. Last season we had sort of an Ontario centric and eastern Canada set of guests. So, this season we're going to try to go out west. So, my new podcast host joining me is Jason Haines, who is a superintendent in British Columbia. So how about you, as my new co-host here, why don't you tell me a little about yourself, the course that you're working with and your career, your background?

Jason: So, I'm currently the superintendent of Sunshine Coast Golf and Country Club. I've been there for the past four years. And before that I was at Pender Harbor Golf Club and I was there, similar to a lot of people, started as a teenager and worked my way up, became a superintendent in 2007. And I mean, during that time, you know, the financial recession and all that. But I started reaching out with a blog just to kind of address some of the challenges that I was facing with budgets and with the threat of a pesticide ban and all that. And that got me some attention. And I was able to, you know, travel the world talking about my experience as a groundskeeper. And I did a lot of talks actually, with other PhDs to kind of put out some of their research topics, put that into practice and kind of give a perspective from the greenskeeper side of things. But two weeks ago, I accepted a position as the superintendent at Cabot Cape Breton. So, in two weeks from now, I'm traveling across the country to the second best coast to give it a whirl to see what it's like to grow grass on the other side of the continent and on a course with almost no trees. So, it's going to be a bit of a contrast and a good challenge.

Sara: Yeah. So thanks for accepting this volunteer position. You just sort of popped in and said, "Hey, I like the podcast". So I was like, "Hey, you're out west. I would like a co-host to cover Western Canada." So, here you are. So, what did you like about the podcast?

Jason: I just liked hearing about all of the various people in the turf grass industry. From a Canadian perspective, most of what you hear about these days is quite a bit of Americans. There's a few Canadians that get out there, but to have a Canadian specific was really nice.

Sara: Yeah. And even when, like I recently hosted the Ontario Turf Grass Symposium and trying to find speakers that have research coming out of Canada, it's also pretty hard to find Canadian specific research. And sometimes when you have American speakers, they come up and you talk about products that we don't have, you know, and it's kind of frustrating for everyone.

Jason: You know, we're dealing with a lot of issues with labor, and I mean comparatively in the United States. So, we have we pay a lot more here and we have a much higher standard, I guess is what I would call it. So, a lot of what works down there doesn't work here. Same thing with chemical control. We don't have as much and it's in some instances going becoming less and less. So. Nice to have a Canadian perspective.

Sara: What was the blog that you mentioned? Are you still running the blog or what's the blog?

Jason: The blog was originally called Turf Hacker, and I've changed it, just simplified it. I was tired of paying off the domain name, so it's called Fusariumy, because I do talk a lot about *Microdochium nivale*, which is known as Fusarium. And you know, there's lots of disease at certain times of the year, so it's yummy.

Sara: I see. That's actually a nice mesh with me because when I did my masters, I actually did it on *Microdochium* patch. So yeah. We have bonded over fungus. We're basically the same person.

Jason: And I come from - I mean - I guess from a groundskeeper standpoint, we don't like to see fungus like a pathologist would, But, but again, that's been part of my strategy. It's that by having active disease you can, you can use that to guide your management practices. So that's when we've always had a little bit of disease hanging around.

Sara: Yeah, well, and that's, you know, people come here to the Guelph Turfgrass Institute and they look at it like, "Oh my God, you have so many weeds." It's like, "Yeah, because that means we can test herbicides, right?" We wouldn't be able to test those products if we didn't let it get a little bit lean, right?

Jason: So, yeah, you have to grow bad grass intentionally to get problems.

Sara: So true. So, what are you looking forward to? You know, some of the guests that I sort of pitched to you. What are you looking forward to in this season of Canadian turf talks?

Jason: Well, I mean, from my perspective, I've always been the interviewee. I've never been the interviewer. So, I'm really looking forward to hearing from a lot of people that I know personally and just getting to know what makes their operations unique and how they are addressing the challenges that they face that that we may not have heard before.

Sara: So here's a little teaser. We have a future guest coming in who is from DLF Pickseed and another who is coming in from Syngenta. So these are two supplier industry interviewees that I'm sure they're going to give us some really unique perspectives on the green industry. As far

as I know, I really just know growing grass and they're going to tell us about the chemical and seed supply side of it. And I definitely don't know that sort of side of the industry. And I think it's important for us to be aware that there's movement within the industry. You know, you're not necessarily stuck in one spot. If you start as the superintendent, you can go into lawn care, you can go into municipalities, you can go to sports, you can go into supply, you can go to seeds. You know, it's not a linear pathway. I think that's really cool.

Jason: Yeah, I mean, that's something that I've always been attracted to in the industry is that the sky is the limit. It's not like a lot of jobs where, you know, what you're doing on day one is what you'll be doing for the rest of your career. There's just so much potential.

Sara: There's no grass ceiling.

No. Oh, that's a Dad joke.

Sara: Oh, yeah, that was. Yeah, I got my dad joke license. Don't worry, I'm certified. So, yeah. Is there anything else you want to add to the teaser trailer?

Jason: Yeah. I'm just looking forward to talking to some different people, and hopefully I can come up with some good questions. And I've got a bit of research to do, which I'm also kind of looking forward to, although I'm a little bit busy. But if we're organized, I think it should work.

Sara: Oh yeah, ramping up for the season. What's the weather like out there?

Jason: Well, it's been colder than normal and but it's been relatively dry winter by relatively dry. We've only had, you know, 500 or 600 millimeters of rain. So that, believe it or not, is dry out west here. And the last week that I'm at Sunshine Coast, we're going to aerify the greens and then I'm going to hop on a plane and then learn an entirely new operation in an entirely new place. So, I'm going to be pretty busy. But I should have time to do this. No problem.

Sara: Really, thanks for your time and thanks for participating in this, because I think it's really important that like this podcast is sort of housed in the Guelph Turfgrass Institute, but I don't have as much field experience. I'm a lab rat myself, so having two co-hosts kind of balances that out and helps us create unique questions and conversations as well.

Jason: Maybe that's part of the one of the things that I really like about it. One of the one of the one of my favorite things that I've done is do talks with academics. I've done talks with PhDs like Micha Woods, Larry Stoll, Bill Kreuser, and those all of those talks has been nice to have the green keepers perspective. It was also nice to have the PhD backing up some of the stuff that I talk about with some of the actual science. So cool. Yeah. So, I'm busy. But this this to me, I don't know. It doesn't really seem too much like work.

Sara: Yeah, this is fun. I don't feel like I'm working when I'm doing this. Except when I'm editing it.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the work. I mean, if I'm not editing it and then I just have to do the fun part, which is talk to people and think of good questions.

Sara: So see, and honestly, I find that the hard part sometimes is thinking of questions, \

Jason: so it's perfect!

Sara: So stay tuned to Canadian Turf Talks. We're available on most major podcast platforms, including iHeart, Stitcher, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts. And leave us like a follow, like, comment, and share with your friends. Because the more listeners we have for this program, the bigger and better we can make it. Also, follow us to the Guelph Turfgrass Institute on all your social media sites at GuelphTurf, and we'll see you soon for season two.

Music Outro

Sara: This podcast is brought to you by the University of Guelph and the Guelph Turfgrass Institute.