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ON THE COVER: Kevin Sunderman, CGCS from Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club, helped set a new course for the Florida GCSA. Photo: Chris Hewitt.



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Camaraderie is More than Simply Making Friends

If recent weather news is any indication; the start to 2016 promises to be cool and wet with El Nino weather patterns similar to those experienced in 1997. Those of us who were here in Florida during that fateful year will recall that it was incredibly challenging. Dr. Monica Elliot and bermudagrass decline became well-known names in committee and boardrooms throughout the state.

But, as so often is the case, there was a silver lining to those clouds. Veterans of that year remember the great camaraderie that was generated as superintendents and industry partners came together to work through those challenges. But the truth is we don't have to wait for the grim times to build those networks. Year after year, our 11 chapters and state organization provide a wealth of opportunities for us to get together with our peers.

Good networking is one of the best investments you can make in your career and on behalf of your facility. It may take one simple conversation with another superintendent or vendor to provide some nugget of information that enlightens you and benefits your organization. Just as importantly, you might be able to provide that answer for someone else.

I know that I benefited greatly from my own network as one of the many superintendents who oversaw golf course renovations and remodels across our state in 2015. Although these projects can appear to be glamorous and exciting; they can often be thankless, lonely and filled with all sorts of competing pressures between our aspirations and our resources.

However, there is no success without some risk of failure, no reward without hard work, no opportunity without criticism and no true leadership without trust. Once again, reaching out and networking with superintendents that have already been down this road can reduce your own stress levels, provide new ideas and perhaps prevent costly mistakes.

One of the key components of our success at Copperleaf Golf Club was the network of superintendents and vendors that I have been able to surround myself with. They were instrumental in helping achieve our goals. But I would not have developed those relationships without attending local meetings, becoming engaged in the local chapter and taking on roles at a state level.

Nothing brings people together like shared experience and your local chapter and state association events give you the chance to share the good, the bad and the ugly, and to learn from it all.

One of the many purposes of the Florida GCSA is to unify the superintendents of the state, but not just because it's nice to make friends. Coming together expands the knowledge base for everyone and gives us a stronger voice as a profession in an industry that needs representation in these challenging economic and regulatory times.

So, I encourage each of you in this New Year to attend at least one meeting or seminar and get engaged with your local chapter and your state organization. You'll be helping yourself, your colleagues, your profession and your industry. ■



David Dore-Smith



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*also to Lisa McDowell,
Tom Alex and the Villas of
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our event.*



39TH ANNUAL

LARRY KAMPHAUS CROWFOOT OPEN



New Web Site to Build Chapter Communities



Jennifer Bryan

Like many of us at this time of year, the Florida GCSA is undertaking a thorough a self-evaluation. No, we don't need to lose those pesky 10lbs, exercise more, spend more time with family or work on our slice, etc. But the association does need to find better ways to improve our internal functions and create a better membership experience overall.

To begin this process, the Florida GCSA board of directors has agreed to contract with YourMembership (YM), a software management company, to help us design and implement a new website and membership database that will be managed in one comprehensive all-in-one membership software platform. This is long overdue and I am excited to learn what new technology is available to us and bring these changes to you.

Over the next few months, I will work with a design team and your local chapters to create a website that reflects your needs and becomes a valuable tool for our chapters, members and sponsors. Your input will be important and, as always, much appreciated.

What can you and your chapters expect from this new website and database?

For a start, each chapter will have access to their own chapter's membership information at any time via the website. All data will be collected and maintained on the YM server. Members will receive automatic invoices for renewal as well as automatic reminders when dues have not been renewed. Members will be able to access all their membership information and make changes as needed. Those changes will be real time changes and will be reflected on the web site immediately.

Each chapter will have their own "community" within the new website. Within this community, members can access information relevant to that chapter. This includes event information, event registration and RSVP capacity, blogs, documents, membership directories, etc. The list is limitless. Within your community you will be able to send newsletters and reminders, manage events and create sub-communities. For instance, the board of directors could be one sub-committee. Golf another and so on.

I plan to visit each of your chapters this spring to provide a live demonstration of the new website and database and get your feedback. Our goal is to have the first version of the new website up and running by May 1. As with any new website and database, we will experience challenges and areas for improvement.

I look forward to getting your input and feedback and will be grateful for your patience as the association moves into 2016. This is an exciting year for the Florida GCSA, beginning with a new look for our magazine that you get to experience with this first issue of 2016. As you can see we have a lot going on.

And now that I think about it, maybe we should work on that slice as well. ■

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CHAPTER ROUND UP

SEVEN RIVERS



From left, Seven Rivers GCSA past-president Andrew Jorgensen, from On Top of The World Communities, with Dr. Jason Kruse, University of Florida, Jim Shaffer, from High Point Golf Club, and UF's new mowers.



Attendees at the annual North Central Florida turfgrass field day.

The Seven Rivers GCSA presented two Jacobsen walking greens mowers to the University of Florida during the annual North Central Florida turfgrass field day. The mowers were donated for use at the Jeff Hayden Envirotron Turfgrass Research Facility.

The 2015 University field day at the G.C. Horn Memorial Turfgrass Field Laboratory at the Plant Science Research and

Education Unit in Citra was sponsored by the Seven Rivers GCSA. The event was well-attended by industry professionals involved with all areas of turfgrass management. Attendees were able to see first-hand the latest turfgrass research and breeding programs being carried out by UF staff.

Dr. William Crow provided an update on turfgrass nematicide trials. Dr. Kevin Kenworthy discussed Zoysiagrass NTEP trials and breeding programs. Dr. Travis Shaddox went over plant responses to fertilization with various micronutrient sources. Dr. Raymon Leon spoke on his research for turfgrass weed control and the balance between efficacy and phytotoxicity when considering weed control options.

CALUSA



Mark Thomas, from Kelley Greens Golf and Country Club, left, and Calusa GCSA manager Samantha Kreisch help register attendees at the Golf for the Children's Christmas Classic.

Nearly 30 boys and girls from The Children's Network of Southwest Florida enjoyed a brighter Christmas thanks to the efforts of Calusa GCSA members. The Calusa GCSA raised about \$20,000 for the charity through their annual Golf for the Children's Christmas Classic at The Forest Country Club mid-December. Some 35 foursomes competed despite a rainy day. Thanks to hosts Matt Gaudet, CGCS and Josh Sealey for wonderful playing conditions.

Money raised helped provide gifts and gift cards for each child, Christmas dinner and a special Christmas Eve pack including

movies and fun food. Gifts included individually monogrammed towel sets. The Children's Network of Southwest Florida provides welfare services for abused, neglected and at-risk children.

The Calusa GCSA also presented a \$5,000 check to the Florida GCSA to help fund turfgrass research.

TREASURE COAST



From left, Heather Stapleton, ELC education director; Barry Balavender, from John's Island Club; Scott Bell, from Redstick Golf Club; Molly Steinwald, ELC executive director; and Matt Boyd from Orchid Island Golf and Beach Club; at the handover of the \$15,000 grant.

The Treasure Coast GCSA will serve as a grand benefactor of the 20th annual EcoFest Family Celebration at the Environmental Learning Center in Vero Beach on March 6. Each year, up to 4,500 people attend the celebration which is free to the public thanks in part to the support of the Treasure Coast GCSA. The association gave a \$15,000 grant to ELC towards the EcoFest Family Celebration at the 64-acre sanctuary to help advance ecological knowledge and appreciation.

The gift from the Treasure Coast GCSA further underlines members' commitment to the environment. Recently, the association also gave \$5,000 to support GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf. With this and previous donations, the Treasure Coast GCSA became a member of the EIFG Platinum Tee Club and the Statesman's Club in the EIFG's cumulative giving program.

EVERGLADES



Everglades GCSA members with some of the toys donated for the Children's Home Society of Florida.



Lance Allen, of Club Care, and Eric Ruha, from Shadow Wood Country Club, at the annual Christmas tournament.



Ben Catlett with the ball he used for a hole-in-one on the 12th hole of the East course at Imperial Country Club.

As has been the case year after year, the members of the Everglades GCSA followed their hearts and outdid themselves with the annual toy drive in support of the Children's Home Society of Florida. Members brought dozens and dozens of toys to the association's most popular event, the annual Christmas tournament and dinner at Imperial Golf Club in Naples mid-December.

Everglades GCSA president Bryce Koch, from Cypress Lake Country Club in Fort Myers, told members, "Your generosity in the past years have brought so many smiles to the face of children around this area... The gifts donated brightened Christmas for the participants in the Healthy Families Program, Development Disabilities Program, The Early Learning Program and the Independent Living Program." Koch thanked host superintendent Mike Hendricks and his staff for presenting both the East and West courses in excellent condition.

Koch also thanked Scott Ryan, golf course superintendent, and Jay Garrick, head golf professional, at Grandezza Country Club in Estero for hosting the association's pro-superintendent and pro-vendor tournament in November.

The Everglades GCSA also pledged \$15,000 over three years to support GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf, boosting their total giving to the EIFG to more than \$100,000 since 1987. With this donation, the chapter moves to Presidential Club status within the EIFG's

cumulative giving program.

"We are in a very good market for golf and we set a high bar for our association," Koch said. "We are honored to be able to support EIFG and what it does for industry research and scholarships."

CENTRAL FLORIDA



Tom Alex, from Grand Cypress Resort, with Larry Kamphaus Award winner Jim Lyle.

Jim Lyle, former owner of ProPlus and longtime industry supporter, has received the Larry Kamphaus Award from the Central Florida GCSA. The award recognizes the following attributes: family values and community service, dedication to employer, dedication to the golf industry, ties to the Central Florida GCSA and mentoring of employees. Lyle received his award at the association's annual Crowfoot Classic at Grand Cypress Resort in Orlando where Tom Alex was host superintendent.

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NORTH FLORIDA



The field of players before teeing off in the annual Toys4Tots tournament.



Ken Arsenault, Paul Hoffman and Dave Rogers, all of Wesco Turr, were among the field at the annual Fall Classic.

night before where the association marked the birthday of longtime member Ron Hill who was battling illness at the time. Hill has since passed away (See story page 18).

More than 60 golfers competed in the annual Toys4Tots Christmas tournament at South Hampton Golf Club

in St. Augustine in December with Keith Webb as host superintendent. Golfers received raffle tickets for every toy they brought along to the tournament. "Our members were very proud of what we are able to do for the kids," Hooten says. "It was the second year we've done it and we changed a few things which helped us get even more toys donated."



North Florida GCSA director Jeff Pilcher, of Florida Turf Support and president Nate Maurer prepare raffle prizes for the annual Toys4Tots tournament.

The North Florida GCSA recently donated \$3,000 to help with funeral expenses following the tragic death of Donald Curran, stepson of Palm Harbor Golf Club equipment technician, T. J. Richie. "This is why the Benevolent Tournament is held each year so we can help when there is a need in our area," says North Florida GCSA manager Betty Hooten.

The donation came after Palm Harbor superintendent Roger Hale made an appeal on behalf of Richie, who has been in the golf industry for nearly 20 years. Richie's 21-year-old stepson, who he had raised from childhood, had died in an accident.

"We reached out to the golf industry community for help and the response was overwhelming," Hale says. "Thanks to the generosity of the golf industry community of North Florida and beyond, the family will be able to afford the memorial that they and Donald deserve.

T.J., his family and I would like to thank the North Florida GCSA, the Florida GCSA, the MGA and Jackson Group of Palm Harbor Golf Club, and everyone else that contributed to the fund for Donald Curran's funeral expenses.

"This generosity lifted a huge financial and emotional burden from the family and is greatly appreciated.

The generosity of the golf industry community confirms my belief in the generosity it has always shown to those in need within this tight-knit community."

A strong field turned out for the annual Fall Classic at Amelia Island Plantation where host superintendent Jason Wilson produced great conditions for the event. Deron Zendt from Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach won the Crash Cup and low vendor was Doug Andrade of Golf Specialties. The golf tournament followed a reception by the beach the

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PALM BEACH



Deron Zendt, from Banyan Golf Club, and John Spiwak, from Eastpointe Country Club, with some of the bounty donated for Toys4Tots by Palm Beach GCSA members.

Palm Beach GCSA members made a donation of toys and money to Toys4Tots after a successful event at Mayacoo Lakes Country Club in West Palm Beach in

December. Palm Beach GCSA leaders thanked the staff and members of Mayacoo which has now hosted the charity event for five years running. The 2015 event generated a cash donation of \$1,250 for Toys4Tots along with toys. Palm Beach GCSA leaders also thanked association members and vendors for their continued support of the event.

SOUTH FLORIDA

The South Florida GCSA celebrated the 31st anniversary of the annual Missing and Exploited Children tournament at Fort Lauderdale Country Club in October. In honor of the anniversary, the association presented the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children with a check for \$30,000. Tournament chairman, Joe Pantaleo, from Indian Creek Country Club in Miami Beach, said the check took total donations to the charity over the history of the event to about \$580,000. Special thanks

to the host club, Fort Lauderdale Country Club, and to golf course superintendent Todd Ingram for an outstanding job.



Nancy McBride, from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, with Joe Pantaleo, from Fort Lauderdale Country Club, and the check for \$30,000.

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Zendt Wins the Big Five TO SECURE FLORIDA SLAM

Deron Zendt achieved a feat in 2015 that may never be repeated for two very sound reasons. Zendt, from Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach, won all five of the biggest golf events for golf course superintendents in Florida in the calendar year. That is a remarkable feat that requires real ability and, as Zendt freely admits, a “certain amount of luck.”

But almost as remarkable is the fact that he was able to compete in all five events. Superintendents know perhaps better than anyone, what can happen to even the best laid plans. Mother Nature tends not to care too much about dates on a calendar. Which is why anyone’s guess at whether the Florida slam will ever be repeated is as good as Zendt’s.

“It’s not like the Tour players,” he says. “It’s not that easy to set a playing schedule. I wish I could but work always comes first and sometimes the dates of events don’t fit or sometimes things come up. It tends to be a last-minute thing whether I get to play in an event.”

Zendt’s five championship wins were the Poa Annuia Classic at Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Club in May, the Florida GCSA championship at Reunion Resort in August, the Florida Turfgrass Association championship at Grand Cypress Golf Club in September, The Fall Classic at Amelia Island Plantation in October and the Crowfoot Open at Grand Cypress in December.

The undoubted highlight was his seven-under par round of 65 at the Florida GCSA championship on the Watson course at Reunion. It was the lowest round of his tournament playing career but his sixth victory in the history of the event.

At press time, Zendt was hoping to ride his form to GCSAA’s national championship in San Diego in February. He won the national title in Orlando in 2014. ■



1. North Florida GCSA president Nate Maurer from St. Johns Golf and Country Club with Deron Zendt and the Fall Classic trophy. 2. Joe Ondo from Winter Pines Golf Club helps Deron Zendt hoist the Crowfoot Open trophy. 3. Deron Zendt holds the Florida GCSA championship trophy for a sixth time. 4. Deron Zendt with his trophy and host superintendent Nick Sabatino from Hole-in-the-Wall Golf Club.

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Bill Kistler of One Source at Rogers Park with Deron Zendt and the championship scoreboard at the Florida Turfgrass Association championship.

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With special thanks to host club, Fort Lauderdale Country Club and golf course superintendent Todd Ingram for an outstanding job.



#18 South Course, Ft. Lauderdale Country Club.
Photo by Joel Jackson.

When Workplace Anxiety FOLLOWS YOU HOME ...

“It’s not healthy when your wife wakes you up in the middle of the night and you tell her to go water greens.”

Not every drop of sweat from a golf course superintendent falls in the heat of the day. Sometimes the perspiration beads up from deep within. So it was when Tyler Green’s then-wife shook him awake in the darkness on the couch several years ago.

There’s a reason the golf course superintendent profession made it onto a CNN Money list of stressful occupations in 2014. It’s one thing to try and manage 100 acres when a blemish of mere inches can land you a black eye. But it’s something else to do it when Mother Nature can make a master practitioner look foolish in a matter of hours. And it’s something else again to deal with all that when often the people deciding your fate are inadequately qualified to truly judge your performance.

For some like Green, golf course superintendent at Southern Dunes Golf and Country Club in Haines City, the driving desire to do well in that environment can lead them to being unwell. It can even put them in hospital, out of a job, or perhaps even worse. Green, 32, has been through three hospital visits over the years as a result of anxiety attacks.

“The last one I had was right before got a new assistant, four years ago,” Green says, recalling how he drove himself to the emergency room. “I thought I was having a heart attack. They sweep you off your feet, throw you in the back and start running IVs on you, EKG machines, cardiograms, you name it.”

Chest pain is a common symptom of an anxiety attack, along with flushing skin, a racing heart and difficulty breathing. Green, who has high blood pressure and high cholesterol to this day – largely because of genetics – wasn’t the only one fearful he was going into cardiac arrest.

“They sent me to a cardiologist and he was monitoring me every few months,” he says. “Eventually, he told me I was as healthy as a horse and that I was experiencing anxiety attacks. He told me I needed to quit borrowing trouble.”

That was after the first one. Giving up “trouble” was easier said



Tyler Green leads a busy life as a golf course superintendent coupled with his role as a Florida GCSA director representing the Ridge GCSA.

than done. “It’s sad really, how much it can get to you,” Green says of the job. “I know there are a lot of guys out there who aren’t in the business anymore that just got burned out. I guarantee they’re just like ‘I’m done with it.’”

That is one reason Green is stepping forward to bring attention to issue of workplace stress and anxiety. He fears the superintendent profession and the broader golf industry are worse off for losing some talented people for whom the pressure became too much. He has worked alongside some and as recently as last fall learned of another colleague at a high-profile facility whose health was suffering as a result of anxiety.

“We’re seeing how much participation has shut down because guys are afraid to leave their golf courses now,” Green says, adding that while the economy may have rebounded to a degree post-recession, the golf industry remains on a tight leash where every cent matters. “There’s a lot of pressure. It’s dog eat dog out there for superintendents just trying to do their job.”

“I think as superintendents we put so much pressure on ourselves,” he adds. “We’re dealing with the weather conditions all the time, pressing on the budget, trying to make things happen. You’re always hearing something about being compared to other clubs. We’re all dealing with the same stuff.”

“In my case, I just think it was just being green, just worrying about everything and trying to be the best. And I would never say no to my general manager in those times. I’d just say, ‘Yeah, of course, we’ll do that.’ I think I just overloaded myself.”

Green wonders whether taking the job home and those troubled nights contributed to the breakdown of his marriage. "Who knows if that had anything to do with it," he says. "But my ex-wife would wake me up sometimes and I'd be telling her to go hand water the left side of No. 13. That kind of stuff. That's not healthy."

Eventually, Green broached the subject with his general manager, Shane Trice, who along with head golf professional, Kevin Woodward, spends several mornings a week helping out with golf course maintenance tasks. "I told my GM, 'Man, I feel like I've aged 20 years in five,'" Green says. "He said, 'You've got to realize that this is such a small part of our lives. I know you want to be the best and that's one of the reasons why we got you. You're always trying to work harder and do more with what we give you. But there's more to life.'"

Since then, Green has made a deliberate effort to introduce balance to his life and maintain perspective about his work. For him, that includes getting to work about 5.30am but spending his initial hour on himself. He might read the Bible or scroll through the online service Divine Mentor. He subscribes to daily devotionals from the PGA Tour with the likes of Ben Crane and Bubba Watson.

"I've always been a man of faith," Green says. "My assistant superintendent, who is about 15 years older than me and a former superintendent, he and I will sit and talk about a daily devotional type thing. That's helped a lot, not to mention there's a lot to say for enjoying the people around you and life."

One person who has entered his life in recent years is his soon-to-be bride Bethany. "She is a wonderful woman who has helped me so much in the past few years," Green says. "She has helped me grow in my faith and control my stress."

There are simple steps, or rituals, that Green uses to help stay grounded as well. "My advice to anyone would be to take the favorite spot on your golf course and just go and sit there in the morning and watch the sun come up," he says. "Turn your handheld radio down a little and just take it all in because we have the best jobs in the world if you ask me."

There is a spot on the approach to the 13th green at Southern Dunes that Green calls his own "Amen Corner." "There's no houses around that part of the course and I can see down 14, 15 and 16 fairways. I'll just go out and sit there. If anyone

needs me badly enough they can call me on my cell phone."

Green is not suggesting that a 20-minute meditation on the golf course will solve every challenge for superintendents. But in his case, he has found that dedicating time each day to drawing breath on his own terms, at his own pace, has helped significantly. "I knew I had to do something differently," he says. "I didn't want to change my career." ■



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Laying it Out There

ORLANDO MEETING A TURNING POINT

By Trent Bouts

Big ships are slow to turn but for it to happen at all, someone must first put a hand on the helm. That's what Kevin Sunderman did when he clicked open a Power Point presentation in Orlando during a lull in Golf Industry Show week in 2014. For the next hour or so, Sunderman laid the business of the Florida GCSA bare. It was less than a pretty picture.

In front of maybe 50 people - directors, past-presidents, chapter leaders and vendors - he depicted an association taking on water and devoid of direction. It had lost money, sometimes as much as \$20,000, nearly every year for the previous decade. Members, it seemed, were becoming increasingly skeptical about the value of belonging. Some didn't even know there was a difference between the Florida GCSA and the Florida Turfgrass Association, let alone know what that difference was.

All the while, a cloud lingered over the relationship between the Florida GCSA and the 11 local GCSAA-affiliated chapters in the state. There was an affiliation agreement intended to put everyone on the same page but it had pretty much evaporated into irrelevance since being signed in 1999. For years since, questions festered about which association should do what for whom and where resources should go. So many questions, in fact, that the uncertainty fuelled suspicions that weighed like an anchor on all parties.

That latter issue had nagged at Sunderman his entire time on the Florida GCSA board. There was a "huge argument" at his very first board meeting in 2008. He remembers two directors, one, very state chapter oriented, and the other, very much in the local chapter corner, "going at it." Now, on this day in Orlando, six years later, it was time to take the sting out of that fight and redirect the energy. It was time to set a new course.

"Kevin basically pulled the covers off and showed everyone what the wizard really looked like," says Bill Davidson, CGCS from the Country Club of Naples, who was vice-president to Sunderman at the time. "He gave a lot of historical data. He showed the inner-workings, the nitty-gritty. He exposed the dirty truth so everyone could digest it."

But it wasn't all grim sailing. Having given the history, Sunderman then turned to the future, to what could be. He talked of greater collaboration between the state and local associations and how a strong state body could empower the locals by leveraging technology and economies of scale. He talked of the posi-

tive influence that a unified voice of a strong state body could bring to critical areas such as government relations.

"I think there was a lot of eye-opening that day," Davidson says. "Kevin laid it out there. It was, 'This is where we are. And this is where we could be. Now let's work on the route between the two.' There was a lot of discussion during the second half of the meeting and the reaction was very positive."

For his part, Sunderman, from Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club in St. Petersburg, credits Davidson for sowing the seeds of change, at least in his mind. "Bill ignited the spark in the back of my head during my time on the board," Sunderman says. "He was the one who kept asking, 'Why do we have to keep doing things the way they were done in the past...especially if they're not working?'"

And to Sunderman's eye, from the balance sheet to the talk on the street, things were simply not working. "When I came on board there was no clear mission, direction or continuity," he says. "I thought, 'What did I get myself into? What are we trying to achieve?' There's this entity (the Florida GCSA) but nobody's sure what it's supposed to be doing."

Over time, Sunderman identified a list of concerns in addition to the almost annual drain on the bank, among them:

- The board of directors met four times a year but, with little communication between times, any momentum soon dissipated as directors went back to their day jobs;
- New directors came and went too often sapping the association of institutional knowledge;
- There were too many committees with not enough people serving and no structure to determine their effectiveness;
- Communication between the state and local associations was inconsistent and often inadequate even when it did occur;
- The range of services provided by the state association was too narrow.

"It was clear we had a failing business but, wait a minute, we were probably failing because no one had the job of making sure it didn't fail," Sunderman says. "The association had seen good leaders, good people, over the years. But they were operating from an old system. So we had a failing business not because of the people but because no one was charged with actually running the business."

Indeed, Sunderman points out that it was to the credit of people, like former executive director and Florida Green editor Joel Jackson, CGCS, and past-president Mark Kann, that the association was able to achieve as much as it did in government relations and with the BMP program despite the hurdles.

But by the time he moved through the Florida GCSA offices to become president, Sunderman was convinced: “We needed to shift the focus away from the status quo. We had to re-brand ourselves as an association and give members a better idea of the value and services we could offer. We had to shift the culture and provide more benefit, otherwise, why be in business?”

Since that meeting in Orlando, the association has made Jennifer Bryan the new executive director with an express charge of running the business, which now operates in the black. “Jennifer has been instrumental in turning things around,” Sunderman says. “For so long she sat in a purely administrative and clerical-type role. But since she has had the opportunity to take some leadership and make some changes she has done a wonderful job.”

One of those changes means new board members now undergo an orientation program to help them be more effective sooner. A summary of each board meeting including outcomes, tasks and responsibilities, is distributed to all directors and each chapter.

Committees have also been consolidated with clear SOPs. There is also a concerted effort to recruit talent to serve on those committees. “Greg Pheneger (from John’s Island Club in Indian River Shores) has done a great job with government relations,” Sunderman says. “He’s recruited a member from each local association so that the work is not left to one or two people.”

Sunderman says John Curran, also from John’s Island Club, has been similarly effective with the research committee. “We’d realized that we stopped receiving donations from chapters for research,” Sunderman says. “Well, we had never reported back to them what the money was going on. Too many times we were waiting for professors to tell us what they wanted to do rather than us telling them what superintendents needed.”

The association is also working to add value through its events and networking opportunities. “Our golf championship used to be on a Saturday in October,” Sunderman says. “It was seen as a competition just for serious golfers. We moved it to a Friday in August so we weren’t competing with football. We included a two-person scramble which offered a fun aspect to the event and immediately saw more participation.”

Soon the association will unveil a new website and engage new database software, which will streamline the experience for members at both a state and local level. The website will also provide local chapters with their own sites that can include event information, event registration and RSVP capacity, blogs, documents, membership directories and more.

“We’ve definitely seen some headway and we’ve started making a profit,” Sunderman says. “The rebound of the economy has certainly helped but instead of losing \$10,000 to \$20,000 we’re making a healthy profit. That’s money we can reinvest so we can provide more resources, more services. It’s money we can use to assist the local associations, to help make them stronger.” ■



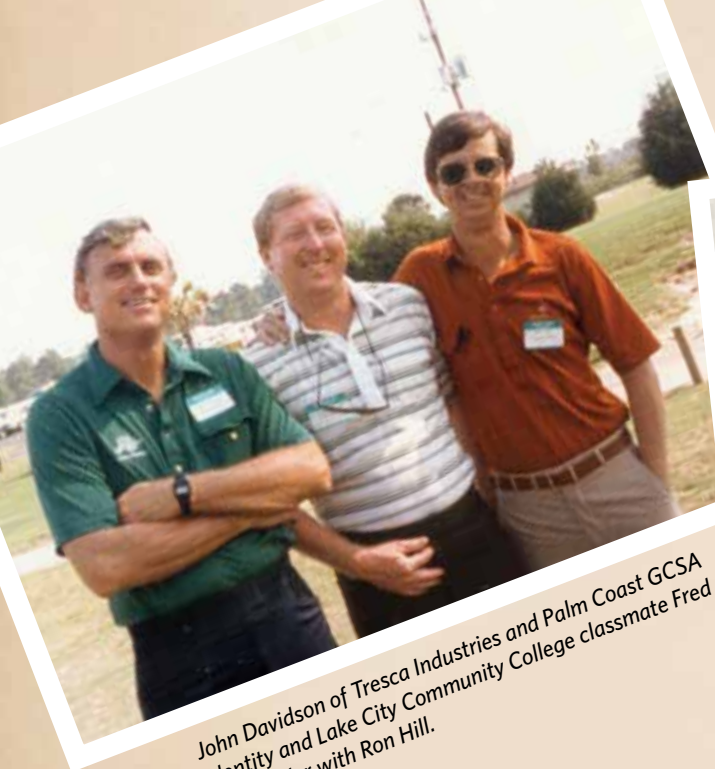
Kevin Sunderman was raised in rural New London, Ohio. His father ran a farmers’ cooperative and that agricultural exposure coupled with a love of golf steered Sunderman towards a career as a golf course superintendent. But he hated the cold, something northern Ohio does very well for six months of the year. So while he pursued his turfgrass degree at Ohio State University, he set himself a post-graduation goal of moving to Florida.

The nearest opportunity he could find out of college in 2000 was about half-way down, at Snee Farm Country Club in Mt. Pleasant, SC. There he met his wife Melani who was the club’s catering director. In 2002, he completed the second leg of his journey arriving at East Lake Woodlands Country Club in Oldsmar. The Sundermans welcomed their second child about a month later.

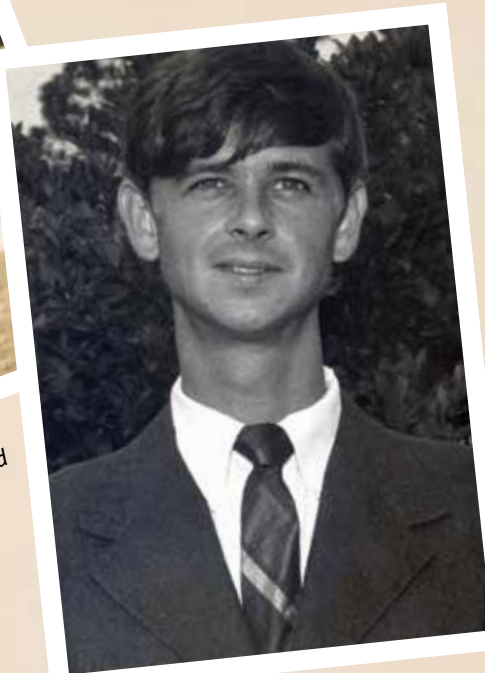
It wasn’t long before the gap between an assistant superintendent salary and the needs of a family of four began to weigh heavily. Following the lead of a brother back in Ohio, Sunderman took a leap, got himself qualified and opened an office with Edward Jones Investments in Bradenton. He soon learned that when the markets were up, so was he. The trouble, of course, is that markets aren’t always up.

“You can’t control the markets but I still took personal responsibility,” Sunderman says. “If the markets were doing badly and people were losing money I felt badly. It’s a rough way to live your life. But at the end of the day, I truly missed the golf course superintendent world. You still get the business aspect but you also get to be very hands-on and to do so much of it in the outdoors. So even more than leaving finance behind, I was motivated by coming back to what I loved.”

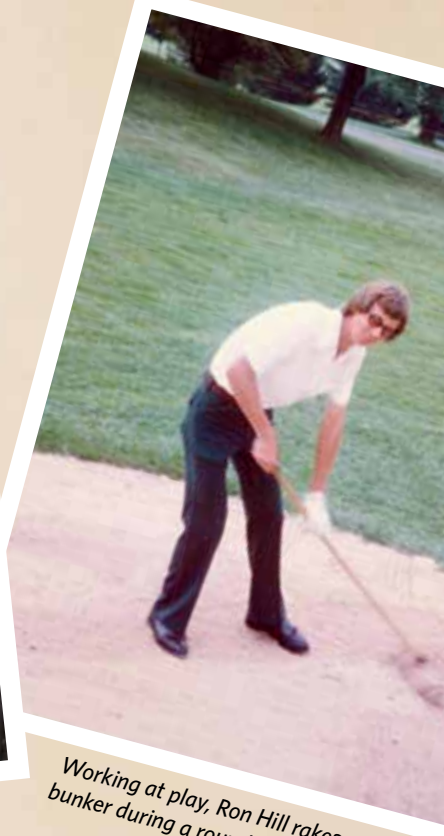
So at the end of 2003, he returned to golf course maintenance as an assistant superintendent at TPC Prestancia in Sarasota. Eighteen months later, in the summer of 2005, he got his chance as director of grounds at Isla Del Sol and has been there, and happy, ever since.



John Davidson of Tresca Industries and Palm Coast GCSA identity and Lake City Community College classmate Fred Kleinfelder with Ron Hill.



A very young Ron Hill.



Working at play, Ron Hill rakes a bunker during a round.

Florida Loses a LEGEND


Ron Hill was Devoted to People, His Profession and Amelia Island

By Trent Bouts



Ryan Hill was at his dad's arm as they stepped into the room at the Florida GCSA reception during the Golf Industry Show in Orlando in 2014. As a regional manager for Ewing Irrigation Products, it was hardly unfamiliar territory for the son. Still, he was quickly taken aback and eventually overwhelmed by what transpired.

Pictured left: North Florida area superintendent Alan Stoffel and Ron Hill.



“He was always an extremely humble man and extremely dedicated to what he did - through good times and bad ... He was a true Southern gentleman.”

“We got about five feet inside the door and then didn’t move from there for an hour,” Ryan Hill says. “It was just a constant stream of people coming up and saying hello and recalling times with my father. It was pretty amazing, just one after another, after another.”

That father of course was Ron Hill, who for decades was the heart and soul behind the quality of golf course conditioning across 54 holes at Amelia Island Plantation Resort in the state’s northeastern corner. Hill died in November aged 69 after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. But while Hill’s own recall may have faded in recent years, countless others in the industry will never forget him.

That explains why the Hill and his son were virtually pinned to the spot at BB King’s Blues Club that night two years ago. Ron Hill made an indelible impression on many people through his expertise as a superintendent and with his passion for the game. But even more importantly, people knew him as an exceptional a human being. They wanted to make the most of what many expected would be one of their last opportunities to say thanks.

So the handshakes, smiles and pats on the back went on, and on, and on.

“I’m a 50-year-old who has been in this business for a long time now and has met and dealt with a lot of people,” says Allan Maccurrach of Maccurrach Golf Construction. “Ron is as great a person as I have ever met in my life, period. Such a character-rich individual. Such a balanced person. The net character of the guy is what is so impressive about him. And that’s in addition to his skills as a superintendent.”

Maccurrach’s company was just starting out when he first met Hill in the late 1980s. “We were young and we needed somebody to believe in us enough to give us an opportunity,” Maccurrach says. Hill made that investment allowing Maccurrach to “put the first shovels in nine holes of the Oak Marsh course since Pete Dye built it with Ron in the ‘70s.”



Ron Hill later in life.

Maccurrach laughs when recalls how grateful he was for the chance but at the same time, nervous about the stage he found himself on. “It was a great opportunity for us,” he says. “Ron Hill gave us that opportunity and showed that faith in us. But when somebody like that shows faith in you, by God you had better perform. That puts a real onus on you.”

Hill’s judgment was sound enough. As Maccurrach says, “We’ve gone on to be an alright company, I think.”

Years later, Maccurrach returned the favor bringing Ron Hill’s other son, Chris, on staff for a number of years. He now works in land development with Mattamy Homes.

Tom Brennan of Brennan Golf Sales knew Ron Hill for nearly 30 years. So it was entirely appropriate that he should be among those to speak in Hill’s honor when the North Florida GCSA hosted the annual Fall Classic at Amelia Island last October. By coincidence or perhaps by providence, that evening of October 16 happened to be Hill’s 69 birthday as Fall Classic participants gathered for a twilight reception within earshot of the Atlantic Ocean.

Hill had been a pivotal figure within the North Florida GCSA as a mentor to many, many of whom went on to successful careers of their own like the golf course architect Bobby Weed, or Berry Collett, CGCS who manages four courses and hosts the RSM Classic for the PGA Tour at Sea Island Resort, GA.

But Hill was also as a key volunteer for the association serving in almost every official capacity over the years including as president in 1976. He was closely involved with the formation of the Florida GCSA in 1978. So he was well and truly an established leader in the profession when Brennan first called on him selling Jacobsen with Buddy Tresca for Tresca Industries in 1987.

“It was a key account obviously and fortunately Ron and I hit it off right away,” Brennan says. “It wasn’t just our love for golf. We had a lot in common. I would see him almost weekly. He was an

intellectual, always studying, reading. He was interested in all kinds of things.”

“Ron’s humility was something too,” Brennan says. “He was always an extremely humble man and extremely dedicated to what he did - through good times and bad. Ron never had a negative thing to say about anyone or anything. In all my years of knowing him, I never knew of anyone who met him who didn’t like him. He was a true Southern gentleman.”

It wasn’t just Hill’s humility but his sense of humor that stuck with people. “He was a character too, he was funny,” Brennan says. Maccurrach says that wit matched with an unflappable nature enabled Hill to “defuse” potentially tense situations to the benefit of everyone around him.

Berry Collett, who called his mentor at least once a month for the past 22 years, says he learned career-defining lessons from Hill including the value of maintaining a cool-head. “I always admired how Ron handled stressful situations,” Collett says. “He was very level, never lost his temper. I will really miss his calming advice.”

In addition to his skill as a superintendent, Hill was an exceptionally good golfer, qualifying for the match play rounds of the U.S. Amateur in 1978 and 1979. In 1978, he won the prestigious Jacksonville Area Golf Association Championship. He was, in Brennan’s estimation, “probably the most accomplished superintendent golfer in the state for more than 30 years.”

“And he was doing that hitting no more than 30 minutes of balls a week,” says Maccurrach. “He’d get down the back of the driving range with a five iron and hit balls for 10 or 15 minutes once or twice a week. Then he’d go out and shoot 69 in tournament conditions. His quiet time was that 15 minutes at the back of the range.”

Hill was also a member of one of the first graduating class out of the turfgrass management program at Lake City Community College. He was in good company. Along with those of classmates Fred Kleinfelder, Jim Ellison and Danny Alwyn, Hill’s subsequent career “helped put Lake City on the map,” Brennan says. Brennan will remember Hill as a “good man, a dedicated man” who adored his companion and “love of his life” Jacque.

Maccurrach believes Amelia Island was another “love of his life.” “His commitment to that particular piece of property was incredible,” he says. “It wasn’t just that he stayed there through so many different owners but that he turned down so many opportuni-

ties to go elsewhere. We don’t need to get into name-dropping courses but I mean significant opportunities. I’m well aware of them because I was involved with some and tried to pry him away. I mean tremendous offers. But he was dead committed to that facility.”

Ron Hill was born in Sumter, SC on October 16, 1946, the youngest of five children. He went on to serve in the U.S. Air Force from 1966 to 1970 completing tours in Okinawa and the Philippines. After discharge, he moved to North Florida in 1970 to study turfgrass management. Upon graduation, he became assistant golf course superintendent at Harbour Town Golf Links on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina where he worked with resort developer Charles Frazier and Pete Dye.

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It was Frazier and Dye who convinced Hill to move back to North Florida, this time to Amelia Island, to manage construction and grow-in of the three courses that would become Amelia Island Plantation. Under Hill's management, the plantation became one of the first golf facilities in the world to obtain Audubon certification.

In 1997, Hill received the Environmental Stewardship Award from GCSAA. Other accolades followed. In 2001, he received the Florida GCSA's President's Award for Lifetime Service and in 2014 was honored by the North Florida GCSA as the Keeper of the Green with an award for lifetime achievement, named after Allan Maccurrach's father who was the PGA Tour's first staff agronomist.

No one honor probably said as much about what he gave to the golf course superintendent profession as that parade of people lining up to see him that evening in Orlando two years ago. At least not in the eyes of his boys.

"I guess we'd begun to realize over the past five years what an impact he'd had on the industry," Ryan Hill says. "A real aha moment for me came a few years ago when I was putting together an event for Ewing at a golf course. I was talking to the superintendent on the phone and he said, 'Hey, are you Ron Hill's boy?' He told me that, when he was putting in TifEagle, he remembered that my dad was one of the first to do so and so he called him up and asked for some advice.



Billy Griffith and Berry Collett, CGCS flank mentor Ron Hill with his Keeper of the Green award and Allan Maccurrach on the right.

"He said he'd called a few people and they were too busy or didn't really have much to offer him. But he said my dad came out to his course and spent the entire day riding the course giving him tips on how to manage the grass. He was so grateful, that he wasn't a really well known superintendent in the area but my dad still took the time to go and offer what he help he could. Dad just never talked about himself or the impact that he had. It's been a lot more than we ever knew." ■



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Golf course superintendents should study the manual before sitting down to take the certification test in Florida GCSA's Best Management Practices program. The advice comes from Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan, who has helped oversee the certification testing since its inception. To date, about one third of Florida GCSA members are certified in the BMP program, well short of the 50 percent target set by the association when the program started in 2012.

Roughly one quarter of those who take the test fail at the first attempt. "It's not because these superintendents aren't already doing the right thing on the golf course," O'Brien says. "It's a lot like taking a driving test after you've had your license for 20 years and never having had an accident. A lot of it is experience and judgment in getting to be a safe driver. But you might not be fully familiar with all the technical terminology."

The key to a successful exam result is studying the association's BMP manual O'Brien says, adding, "The reality is, if you've never opened the book you're never going to pass."

The fact the exam is so exacting only adds to the credibility of the program developed in partnership between the Florida GCSA, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the USGA Green Section and the University of Florida. The program is intended for golf course superintendents, assistant superintendents and other industry professionals to demonstrate their understanding and implementation of golf BMPs in their operations and maintenance.

With governments and regulatory agencies ramping up their focus on land and resource use, it is becoming increasingly important for golf course superintendents not just to do the right thing but to be seen doing the right thing. The BMP certification program is a powerful avenue for demonstrating that commitment.

"Our contention is that all superintendents meet more than the minimum required standards when it comes to their daily golf

course operations," O'Brien says. "But as the very name of the certification program attests, its goal is to ensure the best management practices – to go beyond doing the right thing and strive for doing the best thing."

O'Brien also points out that while the association has fallen short of its participation target, there are many factors that dictate whether a superintendent is available for the exam. "This is a voluntary program after all," she says. "Guys are busy enough in their day-to-day operations. And it is a hard test. It's about the very best practices for every aspect of the facility and every golf facility is a vast and complex operation."

The Florida GCSA believes that Florida superintendents are truly environmental stewards and the certification program demonstrates their positive respect for on the environment. The Florida GCSA received the 2015 Excellence in Government Relations Award from GCSAA and Golf Digest in recognition of the BMP certification program. In addition, the BMP program continues to be the model for other BMP programs across the country.

Certification in the BMP certification program is valid for four years. Recertification requires attending an approved seminar covering any BMP changes and updates to legislative requirements. The Florida GCSA is in the process of notifying members due to recertify in 2016.

The certification exam consists of three sections that can be taken together or separately. Each individual taking the examination must score at least 75 percent on each section to become certified. The exam is administered, proctored and graded by the Florida GCSA, with four or five exam sessions throughout the state each year. Certification records are maintained and issued by the Florida GCSA.

The next scheduled certification exam is at the Hampton Inn in Port St. Lucie in February 29. To register or for more information, visit www.floridagcsa.com, or contact Jennifer Bryan at (800) 732-6053 or fgcsa@comcast.net. ■



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Tranquilo's Equipment Technician EARNS AWARD WITH WIDE SUPPORT

Successful golf course superintendents rarely make any secret of the value that a good equipment technician brings to their operation. That is why Rusty Wilson, from Tranquilo Golf Club at Four Seasons in Windermere, was so ready to support Stephen Tucker's nomination for the highest honor available in the field. Wilson's voice was part of a chorus that successfully campaigned for Tucker to win the Edwin Budding Award from GCSAA.

Tucker, 37, was instrumental in establishing the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association in 2007. He also helped create the first recognized certificate program for golf course equipment technicians. He became the first president of IGCEMA and eventually became executive director. In time, IGCEMA became a partner in the annual Golf Industry Show.

The organization dissolved last year and its members became a part of GCSAA. While this meant the end of IGCEMA, it also meant greater professional development and networking opportunities for equipment managers.

While Tucker and Wilson have only been together since June, 2014 they have operated closely as a team in the reinvigoration of Tranquilo, which originally opened in 1992 as Disney's Osprey Ridge. Wilson came to Tranquilo in July, 2013 to oversee a renovation by Tom Fazio, the original designer. Since his arrival, Tucker has helped steer the maintenance facility renovation and new equipment purchasing. Tranquilo Golf Club opened for play in November, 2014.

"Stephen is the best of the best, and he should be recognized for all of his efforts – not only for doing his day-to-day job, but his continued efforts to raise the bar within the golf industry," Wilson says.

Tucker was to receive his award at the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association's Turf Management Exhibition in Harrogate, England in mid-January. The Edwin Budding Award is named for the inventor of the lawnmower and presented in



A winning team: Tranquilo Golf Club superintendent Rusty Wilson, left, was a key supporter of equipment technician Stephen Tucker's nomination for the Edwin Budding Award.

partnership with Ransomes/Jacobsen. It goes to equipment managers and related innovators, technicians, educators, or engineers who have made a significant impact in the golf and turf business.

A native of Live Oak, FL and a graduate of Lake City College (now Florida Gateway College), Tucker has spent more than 16 years in the industry. "It's very humbling to be chosen for the Budding Award," he says. "But I feel that I still have a lot more to do in the industry. I would also not be where I am without all the leaders and volunteers I had with me. I want to accept the award on behalf of all of those guys."

Wilson cites Tucker as one of "few people" he has encountered during his career who is "never satisfied with the current status." "Stephen is always pushing innovation and how to make things easier while improving the overall golf course product," Wilson says. "Stephen is the best of the best and should be recognized for all his efforts not only for doing his day to day job but his continued efforts to raise the bar within the Golf Industry."

The breadth of Tucker's impact is reflected in the names and geographical spread of those who supported his formal nomination for the award. Mike Kriz, equipment manager from Arrowhead Country Club in Rapid City, SD led the nomination effort which, in addition to Wilson, was supported by John Piersol, of Florida Gateway College, John Cunningham, CGCS from Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis, MO, John Patterson, equipment manager at Atlanta Athletic Club, in Atlanta, GA and Carl Osterhaus, of The Toro Company in Bloomington, MN. ■



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IN THE NEWS



Rodney Whisman

The Colony Golf and Country Club, Bonita Springs

News Press, September 30

WCI Communities has named Rodney Whisman golf course superintendent at The Colony Golf and Country Club in Bonita Springs. With more than 14 years of experience as a head golf course superintendent and a Paspalum consultant both in the U.S. and overseas, Whisman has knowledge of maintaining Sea-shore Paspalum turfgrass on greens, tees, fairways and roughs. Experienced in agronomy and all phases of golf course construction, Whisman was most recently head golf course superintendent at a golf and country club in Naples

Wes Pitts

Ocala Golf Club, Ocala

Ocala Star-Banner, October 8

Balloons and ribbons decorate the entrance of the Ocala Golf Club, as if a party is planned. In a way, one is. Billy Casper Golf, the private company that operates the city-owned course best known as "Muni," is celebrating \$338,000 worth of revamped greens and bunkers.

The greens have been out of play for the past 14 weeks for repair. Players hit to temporary greens during the project. Beginning Monday, rates will be reduced for the following two weeks so golfers can tee up and check out the improvements. The course now uses TifEagle bermudagrass for its greens and keeps it at about one-eighth of an inch.

To ensure the 18 greens stay perfect the course now incorporates a pH system in which water can be adjusted to an optimal level, said Wes Pitts, course superintendent. The course uses reclaimed city water. The problem is that while the water is safe for the environment, it's no good for the kind of grass growing at the course. The pH system controlling the acidity of the water will help maintain the greens throughout the year, Pitts said.

Ocala City councilman John McLeod, himself a golfer, said he can appreciate the effort that went into the project and that many people don't understand the complexity of maintaining a course. "It's very complicated," he said. "It's like any agricultural product. It's not a guarantee."

Carlos Arraya

Venice Golf and Country Club, Venice

Business Observer, October 23



Golf courses are known for their greens. Not for being green. In fact, golf courses often get a bad rap for things such as water consumption or fertilizer and pesticide use. Venice Golf and Country Club wants to be a different kind of course. Over the past decade or so, the private club has undertaken a variety of efforts to increase its environmental friendliness. And a recently completed \$2.5 million renovation of its golf

course boosted that strategy. It includes the installation of a \$1.7 million, state-of-the-art irrigation system.

On the course, changes start with the new irrigation system that allows the club to individually control each sprinkler head. Data it collects on metrics such as moisture levels provide information to decide on when to water. "Instead of having someone making decisions based on what they feel, it is science-based," says golf course superintendent Carlos Arraya. "The golf course is an expense to the club, so we focus on efficiency. And the better way to do that is through technology."

Because the club now has the capability to water only the areas that need it, it's already seen a 30 percent reduction in water output from the new irrigation system. Arraya sees the potential to increase that number to 50 percent. "And there's energy savings involved in that as well," he says, anticipating a 40 percent reduction annually in electricity use, which translates to about



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Excerpts from press coverage on people in the world of golf course maintenance in Florida.

\$15,000. “Plus with the right amount of moisture you have a better plant with less stress, and less stress means less chemicals. The irrigation system was an investment, but over time it will pay for itself.”

The club has also begun to use radar detection to monitor the health of its turf. Readings of satellite images can pinpoint areas that are stressed. This helps the club make watering and mowing decisions and catch pest or disease outbreaks at an early stage. With this data, the club can focus its efforts just on spots that need it, rather than applying a fungicide, pesticide or fertilizer to the whole course when it's not necessary in most areas. The radar technology costs \$1,500 for an annual subscription; a single fungicide application costs about the same amount. “I like to think of it all as our medical file on the golf course,” says Arraya. “Environmental issues are usually really centralized in certain areas. Because we're such defensive creatures, we want to just protect everything. But we're trying to be ahead of the game.”

Matt Gaudet, CGCS

The Forest Country Club, Fort Myers

Coastal Life, November 4



From the new plants lining both sides of the first hole's tees, many mounds on fairway sides to keep more balls in play to new challenges on the last hole, the goals of improving playability and aesthetics of the Bobcat course through a major improvement project by The Forest Country Club in south Fort Myers have been resoundingly achieved. A series of opening events were held for current, new and prospective members from Oct. 29 through last Monday,

marking the conclusion of the six-month, multi-million-dollar renovation of one of its two 18-hole championship courses.

Scott Bertrand, general manager of The Forest, established in 1979 as the first gated community in Fort Myers with members becoming owners and operators in 1990, said, “We're very pleased. We now have two distinctive courses to serve all demographics.” “We've increased square footage of tee areas and greens by 100 percent,” said Matt Gaudet, director of golf course maintenance and a certified golf course superintendent. “We also increased sustainability for water conservation and habitat enhancements,” by reducing pesticide and water use, improving flood control through replacing lake interconnect pipes and removing invasive species — altogether helping reinforce its status as an Audubon Cooperative Wildlife Sanctuary. There is a new irrigation system, two new pump stations and improved drainage plus major lake bank erosion repairs.

Gaudet pointed out some of the more impactful and appealing changes on several holes. The cart path was moved along hole eight “to give more tee space,” and a new retaining wall on the side of the lake that breaks up the fairway “helped to triple the size of the green.” He said they changed the edge of another lake to widen the ninth hole's fairway and approach. The tenth hole now sports both new bridges and rock walls plus rolling mounds just to the right of the green that should “act like backboards to keep more balls in play.”

The fairways have been re-grassed with Celebration Bermuda and a landscaping program was implemented with thousands of additional shrubs, hundreds of trees and nearly 20,000 individual plants.

High-tech, low-flying ways were deployed to afford members a bird's-eye view of the work's progress. Many videos captured by drones were sent to members by Gaudet of the developments and status of the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th holes last summer. He felt they showed the uniformity of the new grass in fairways and approaches along with the lack of weeds.

“Communication with members is so important,” said Gaudet, in his second year at The Forest, who kept two drones in his office and posted 40-plus videos on YouTube.

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IN THE NEWS



Kirk Richmond

Tiburon Golf Club, Naples

Naples Daily News, November 11

Almost a year ago, Tiburon Golf Club at the Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples was reeling.

Disease had infested a number of the greens just as the LPGA Tour's signature event, the CME Group Tour Championship, was about to be played. A few days later, Greg Norman's Franklin Templeton Shootout was next on the tee.

Kirk Richmond, director of golf course maintenance, had been on the job a matter of months, and had identified some weakness in the greens that made them susceptible to disease. Then colder than normal weather, topped with some rain the week of the LPGA tournament, led to the presence of pythium, a potentially deadly turfgrass disease. "It was like a perfect storm," Tiburon Golf Club general manager Rick Rainville said.

Fast forward, and with the CME Group Tour Championship next week and the Shootout coming up December 7-12, Rainville and Richmond are in a much better place. "We feel a lot better, certainly now, at this stage," Rainville said. "I feel, as a

manager, a big sense of satisfaction in the effort that Kirk and his group have put in."

Richmond, who came from California but has experience at Crooked Stick in his native Indiana and on Key Largo, already had the plan part. Before all of the green issues just prior to the two tour events, he identified some characteristics that needed to be addressed for the greens and the rest of the golf course.

Some of the Tifeagle bermudagrass greens, on the Gold Course especially, were not getting enough airflow or sunlight — the grass needs eight to 10 hours of sunlight per day, Richmond said, and some were only getting three to four hours — and the water quality was poor. In a 70-day period, Tiburon contracted with a local tree company that removed 2,000 cubic yards of invasive and "pop-up" trees, plants and shrubbery that had built up in the facility's 17 years to create better air flow, particularly around the greens.

While Richmond and his team of 40 kept the two courses as playable as possible through the bulk of season ... Richmond sought out advice from his mentor, Los Angeles Country Club superintendent Russ Myers, and worked with newly-named Gold and Black course superintendents Jim Torba and Jason Smith, respectively, who started in February and March.

The group did a whopping seven aerifications ... on the Gold Course from mid-May to mid-August. The water quality also was addressed.

Shannon Wheeler

Wycliffe Golf and Country Club, Wellington

Club and Resort Business, December 8



Growing up in Garner, NC, Shannon Wheeler liked the game of golf, but his family really wasn't in the position to join a country club or pay for him to play regularly. So he took it upon himself to find a way to make it happen. Early in high school, he knocked on the door at the now-defunct Eaglecrest Golf Course and said he was willing to do anything that was needed. He started working in the cart barn, but moved to

the golf course after a year. A career was born - even if he didn't know it at the time.

"My dad traveled for his job and we would play some golf as part of it, so I got the bug from him," Wheeler says. "I figured it would be a great way to play some free golf if I worked at a golf course. I could work early in the day and then play as much as I wanted to afterwards or on the weekend."

Wheeler worked with some interns who attended North Carolina State University, so he decided to follow them and pursue a

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business degree. But he still needed his golf course fix, so he changed his major to turfgrass management and took a job while a student as the irrigation technician at Carolina Country Club, under Bob Rogers. Wheeler earned the turf degree and was ready to join the real world, but his parents told him he would first need to also complete the business degree he had started.

"I thought I was ready to go get a job," Wheeler says. "I had a lot of experience for a college student and the NC State grads were doing well in the industry. My parents thought the business degree would help. Looking back, it was a good decision. We manage large budgets and staffs. We present to boards and owners. The job is so much more than managing turf. The business degree has been helpful."

In addition to his new responsibilities, which he assumed at the end of last year (2014), as director of golf course maintenance at Wycliffe Golf and Country Club in Wellington, Wheeler is also serving this year as the president of the Palm Beach Golf Course Superintendents Association.

Rafael Barajas

Boca Grove Golf and Tennis Club, Boca Raton

PR Newswire, December 12



Boca Grove Golf and Tennis Club in Boca Raton, welcomes Rafael Barajas, CGCS as new golf course superintendent. Barajas comes to Boca Grove with a total of 35 years in the golf industry with 31 of them as a golf course superintendent. He has been a member of the GCSAA for 30 years and certified golf course superintendent for the past 25 years. Barajas is the past-president of the Golf Course Superintendents of

Southern California, past-president of the California Golf Course Superintendents Association and a board member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for the past five years.

Originally from Colima, Mexico, Barajas immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 14 only knowing two words of English. He followed in his brother's footsteps and went to work on a golf course working as part of the maintenance crew at a municipal course in the San Fernando Valley. By the age of 20, Barajas was the superintendent at the Recreation Park Golf Course in Long Beach. Lacking in formal education in turfgrass maintenance and agronomy, Barajas spent the following six years in professional development courses and seminars to become a certified golf course superintendent in 1990. In the mid-1990's Barajas got the superintendent job at Hacienda Golf Club in Southern California where he has been for the last 20 years. He carries a five handicap.

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Florida GCSA Members Vie for National Role

Longtime Florida GCSA leader Darren Davis, CGCS from Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, is in the running for the office of GCSAA secretary-treasurer. Davis is one of two nominees for the job which will be decided at GCSAA's annual meeting during the Golf Industry Show in San Diego, CA from February 6-11. Also in the running is another Florida GCSA member, the recently-arrived Rafael Barajas, CGCS now at Boca Grove Plantation in Boca Raton.

Davis has nearly 30 years in the industry and was Florida GCSA president in 1999-2000 and earned the association's Distinguished Service Award in 2004. In 2013 he received the President's Award for lifetime service. He has spent four years on the GCSAA board.

Barajas is the past-president of the Golf Course Superintendents of Southern California, past-president of the California Golf Course Superintendents Association and a GCSAA board member for the past five years.

This year's annual meeting is at 1.30pm on Thursday, February 11 in Ballroom 6A of the San Diego Convention Center.



Darren Davis, CGCS

Lost Key Recertifies With Prescott's Help

Golf course superintendent Ramsey Prescott has helped Lost Key Golf Club in Pensacola become recertified under Audubon International's silver signature program. Originally designed by Arnold Palmer Golf Designs, Lost Key was the first course in the world to become certified through the silver program in 1998.

"At Lost Key Golf Club, we agree in a co-existence of both humans and nature, and believe that the best way to sustain that co-existence is by developing and maintaining our property with best management practices," Prescott says. "By working with Audubon International through their signature program, we are able to implement effective cultural practices, follow with proper water management techniques, and develop sound fertility programs while protecting the environment and preserving the natural heritage of the game of golf."

Located on Florida's northwest coast near the Alabama state line, the 287-acre property is situated on Perdido Key in Escambia County. The Gulf of Mexico is within one half mile of property's southernmost point.



Ramsey Prescott

"The general course layout originally was designed to utilize upland areas as much as possible in order to avoid and minimize wetland impacts," says Nancy Richardson, Audubon's signature program director. Natural wetland areas were expanded by 5.4 acres by backfilling excavated upland areas with existing wetland muck, thus preserving the site-specific gene pool.

Lost Key Golf Club is one of the few areas of protected wilderness in the Florida panhandle, and has faced significant inundation and damage from hurricanes. But the plant community, a mixture of North Florida flatwoods, sand scrub and North Florida coastal strand, has survived and flourished. Wildlife corridors wind through sand live oak, sand pine and slash pine supporting pairs of nesting osprey and American bald eagle, alligator, deer and healthy shore bird populations.

To become recertified, signature program members must demonstrate their continued commitment to the principles for sustainable resource management as outlined in their site-specific natural resource management plan. This plan addresses wildlife conservation and habitat enhancement, water quality monitoring and management, integrated pest management, water conservation, energy efficiency, waste reduction and management and the adoption of green building products and procedures.

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Atlantic Beach Earns Renovation Award

Atlantic Beach Country Club, where Chesley Scott is golf course superintendent, was one of nine facilities across the nation honored in the fourth annual design excellence recognition program by the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

Announcing the award winners, the ASCGA had the following to say about the project at Atlantic Beach, which was overseen by Erik Larsen. “The famed Selva Marina Country Club had declined to near failure; golf course in terrible condition, and clubhouse, golf and tennis pro shops in disrepair. The land was bought and redeveloped, anchored by a master plan that developed 178 single-family lots on a 55-acre tract in the center of the former golf course, renamed Atlantic Beach Country Club.

“A new golf course – reduced to 125 acres from 180 – was structured around the residential section, along with seven tennis courts, swimming pool and clubhouse. New golf practice facilities with full range, chipping and putting greens, cart barn and fitness center were added to the amenity package. New membership goals and cash flow projections have been reached.”

Since its creation in 2012, the Design Excellence Recognition Program has shone a light on the innovation and problem-solving skills required of today’s golf course designs, whether the project is a small bunker renovation or a full-scale 18-hole layout. The 2015 nominations were reviewed by a panel of golf industry leaders, including representatives of the Club Managers Association of America, GCSAA, Golf Course Builders Association of America and National Golf Course Owners Association.

Two New Faces Join Dow AgroSciences

Dow AgroSciences announces the addition of two new sales representatives in Florida. Jordan Symon joins the Southeast region as a sales representative whose territory will include northern Florida. She received a bachelor’s degree in agricultural communications and journalism from Texas A&M University.



Jordan Symons

Chester VandenBerg has accepted a sales representative position in western Florida. He graduated from Cornerstone University with a bachelor’s degree in business management. He replaces Jan Castanza, who was with Eli Lilly and Dow AgroSciences for more than 40 years.



Chester VandenBerg

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Florida Gateway Student Earns GCSAA Scholarship

Hutson Carter II, from Lake City, was one of 16 winners in GCSAA's 2015 scholars competition. Carter, a student at Florida Gateway College, won a \$2,000 scholarship in the program primarily funded by the Robert Trent Jones Endowment and administered by the Environmental Institute for Golf, GCSAA's philanthropic organization. It was developed to recognize outstanding students planning careers in golf course management.



Winners were selected by GCSAA's scholars competition task group. Criteria included academic achievement, potential to become a leading industry professional, employment history, extracurricular activities and recommendations from a current academic advisor and a superintendent with whom the student has worked.

Applicants must be enrolled in a recognized undergraduate program in a major field related to golf and turf management and be a GCSAA member. Undergraduate applicants must have successfully completed at least 24 credit hours or the equivalent of one year of full-time study in an appropriate major.

Florida Members to Gather in San Diego

Florida GCSA members attending this year's Golf Industry Show in San Diego, CA will gather in the heart of the famous Gaslamp Quarter mid-week. Members and spouses will meet and greet for the annual Florida GCSA reception at the Hotel Palomar on Wednesday, February 10 from 7.30pm to 10.30pm. Wristbands will be required for entry. Wristbands will be mailed to those members (and spouse or significant other) who RSVP to the Florida GCSA in advance of the event. Those planning to attend should contact Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan at (800) 732-6053 or fgcsa@comcast.net.

Dore-Smith Invited To Address Interns

Florida GCSA president David Dore-Smith, from Copperleaf Golf Club in Bonita Springs, will speak to a group of interns attending this year's Golf Industry Show in San Diego, CA. Dore-Smith will speak to as many as 50 interns brought together by Syngenta in advance of the international Syngenta reception on February 10. He has been invited in the capacity of superintendent-mentor to speak about the profession, career tracks and how to steer the right path to success. Others expected to speak to the group include GCSAA chief executive officer Rhett Evans and senior Syngenta leaders.

Mercer Prepares for Women's Four-Ball

Streamsong Resort, where Rusty Mercer is director of agronomy, will host this year's U.S. Women's Amateur Four-Ball Championship from May 21 to 25. The design collaboration between Tom Doak, Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore opened in 2013. The women's four-ball is the only event on the USGA championship schedule in Florida this year.

Dogs Can Earn Chapters \$2,000 in Photo Contest

Dog-owning golf course superintendents and assistant superintendents can earn \$2,000 for their GCSAA affiliated chapter through Bayer's Loyal Companions competition. They are invited to submit a photo of themselves and their dog on course between February 8 and March 11.

A third-party board of judges will select three semi-finalists who will then go to a public vote on Bayer's website to decide the winner. Site visitors can vote once per day for the finalist of their choice until April 22. The entry with the most votes wins. There are prizes for each semi-finalist and the eventual winner including the \$2,000 chapter donation.



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Water Survey Findings Good News at a Critical Time



Ralph Dain, CGCS

Watching the evening news recently, I was astonished to hear that roughly 1,000 people a day were moving into Florida. The state now ranks as the third most populous in the country behind only California and Texas. Obviously, this influx of residents will further increase pressures on our water supplies.

Most of what we have been dealing with of late in the golf industry has centered on water quality. The

Florida GCSA BMP Program was designed to demonstrate how golf course superintendents are good stewards of the environment who use practices and innovative technology to enhance the game's relationship with the land on which it sits.

But water conservation is an important component of the BMPs as well and with the ongoing population growth, it looks destined to become even more important. Some observers predict that the state is headed towards a shortfall of one billion gallons per day in water availability by the year 2030.

Golf course superintendents have been leaders in the area of water conservation and should be applauded for the progress in this regard. The pressures facing all of us in Florida as they relate to water quantity and quality are real and it is encouraging to see industry taking the lead in protecting this resource. It's an issue we need to stay ahead of.

That is why GCSAA's recent results from the second edition of the Golf Course Environmental Profile Survey pertaining to water use and conservation practices are so important. The findings illustrate that the golf industry continues to find ways to conserve this most precious commodity.

Since the initial study in 2007, golf courses have reduced water consumption nationally by nearly 22 percent. The amount of water used by golf courses accounts for 1.44 percent of all irrigation water used in the U.S., which is also down from the initial survey finding of 1.66 percent. This is good news and further proof of golf's commitment to good environmental citizenship. The surveys are being funded by the Environmental Institute for Golf through sponsorship by the USGA.

Golf has achieved these results through various means, several of which are discussed as part of the first segment of the Florida GCSA BMP program. These include advancements in irrigation delivery systems - both in the central controllers and in the irrigation heads themselves, the increased use of hand watering and utilization of wetting agents, the use of soil moisture meters,

as well as voluntary reductions in the amount of irrigated turf - a reduction of just over 14,000 acres nationally was realized over the eight-year period between the two water surveys.

I have only touched on a few of the results from the latest GCEP survey regarding water use and conservation practices. An in-depth summary of the survey results can be viewed in the December 2015 issue of Golf Course Management magazine.

As a member of the golf industry, I am proud to see the advances being made in regard to water conservation. But more challenges are ahead and all of us need to remain diligent if we are to overcome these challenges. I am confident in the ability of golf course superintendents to meet the increasing demands placed on them. Superintendents' continued environmental stewardship will continue to improve practices that will further reduce water use at a time when access to the resource is certain to come under even greater scrutiny and pressure. ■

-Ralph Dain is GCSAA regional representative in Florida. You can reach him at (785) 424-4306 or rdain@gcsaa.org.

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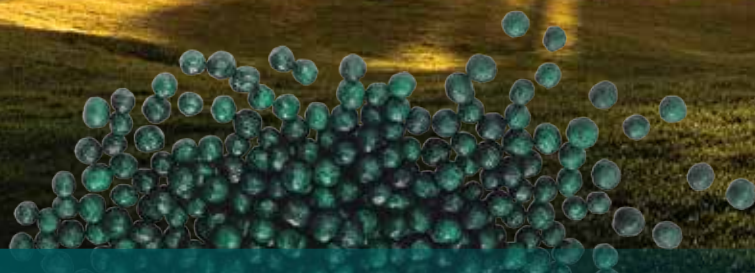
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GreenSmart™ Groundcover



- 100% Organic
- Won't float
- Excellent as an "in-play" surface

Amerigrow Golf has worked tirelessly on Research and Development to bring to life new solutions for the golf course superintendent. GreenSmart™ Groundcover and Core Matrix™ are two unique results of this process. **To learn more about how we can enhance the playability of your course, call us today.**



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Core Matrix™ Amendment



- 100% Organic
- Strengthens root structure
- Superior water retention