



## BRIEFS

### MAGNUM RESIGNS FROM GCSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HEINE JOINS

DULUTH, Ga. — GCSAA president Tommy Witt has accepted the resignation of Ken Magnum from the board of directors. Magnum, first elected to the board in February 1996, will be devoting more time to his position as director of golf courses and grounds here at the Atlanta Athletic Club. Upcoming events such as the 2001 PGA Championship this August, the U.S. Junior Amateur in July 2002 and a remodeling of the Riverside course in 2003 were cited by Magnum as demanding his full attention. Witt has appointed Ricky Heine, superintendent at the Golf Club Star Ranch in Austin, Texas, to fill the position. Heine narrowly lost his campaign for a GCSAA board position last February.



Ricky Heine

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### GIESELER NAMED SUPER AT BEAR'S BEST

DALLAS, Texas — ClubCorp has named Dan Gieseler, CGCS, as the superintendent at Bear's Best Las Vegas, scheduled to open next fall. A second-generation superintendent, he joined ClubCorp in 1976, serving at several of the company's country clubs in Texas and California. Gieseler is already on site at his new course, which is still under construction. The Bear's Best public access courses — another one is being built in Atlanta — have been designed specifically for group play and corporate entertainment.

### SCOTT LEAVES WINGED FOOT FOR BACK BROOK

RINGOES, N.J. — Mike Scott has been hired as superintendent at the Ridge at Back Brook, a new Tom Fazio design unfolding on 300 acres in central New Jersey, northwest of Princeton. Scott was most recently head superintendent at Winged Foot Golf Club (N.Y.).

### GOLFSUPERSEARCH.COM OFFERS FREE SERVICE

HARVARD, Mass. — A new Web site, designed specifically for golf course superintendents, has been launched here by Harvard Golf Partners. The site, located at [www.golfsupersearch.com](http://www.golfsupersearch.com), offers a no-cost service to superintendents searching for new positions.

## Brutal winter leaves major mess for Northeast superintendents

By JOEL JOYNER

WESTON, Mass. — A winter that came in like a lion and left like a lion has left behind a major mess for superintendents in the Northeast.

"It was a cold, cold, cold winter, a big departure from the weather experienced the past two seasons," said USGA agronomist Darin Bevard. "Winterkill probably is the biggest issue right now."

Wet, heavy accumulations of snow, well above average in most places, now bring flood worries. The concerns of snowmelt flooding have focused on areas in southern Maine, all of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, parts of New York state along Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, northern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania, according to the National Weather Service.

Moreover, prolonged ice on greens — for 60 days or more — has left courses in grim shape for the season opening. "We've had severe ice build up this year," said superintendent Jeff Corcoran here at the Weston Golf Club. "We've had at

least five to six inches of ice covering all of our greens. There's no question about turf damage."

### A GUESS AND A GAMBLE

When gambling with Mother Nature, sometimes there's no escaping injury. "It's a matter of which of the two evils do



Winter projects, such as this irrigation project at Oakmont CC, in Pennsylvania, have been frustrated by harsh weather in the Northeast.

you want," Corcoran said. "Do you want ice encasement with oxygen deprivation to the plant, or do you remove it and deal with crown hydration? We decided to leave the ice on until there was a steady thaw. We were in a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation. Ice is a real big pain."

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## Career moves: superintendents weigh merits of 'three-year rule'

By JOEL JOYNER

FORT WASHINGTON, Pa. — In their quest for more prestigious golf courses, better working conditions and fatter paychecks, many superintendents follow the unofficial but compelling "three-year rule." Under this principle, they jump ship and switch to a fancier course every three years or so — at least until they find the perfect job.

Does the "rule" make sense in today's job market? Do loyalty or lasting relationships count for anything? Does job-hopping your way through a career look good on a resume? And finally, is money the only motivator?



Sam Hocutt

Money is not the primary key for Sam Hocutt, one of many superintendents we called to get their take on the three-year itch. Earlier in his career, he was a

true believer in frequent moves.

### ENDURING THE LONG HAUL

"The three-year rule is mostly due to boredom," said Hocutt, now superintendent at the Pawleys Plantation Golf Course on Pawleys Island, S.C. "You can get a course in great shape without a hassle in that time. After that, the job seems too routine. It's not the challenge it used to be."

Hocutt is in his eighth year at the island course, after working three-year stints at Oyster Bay in Calabash, N.C., Carolina Pines in Havelock, N.C., and the Hampton Club on St. Simons Island, Ga. "When building a course, the boredom starts at or about the three-year point. I feel during this period superintendents are at peak performance," he said. "Then they want to go build another one just for the challenge."

Family responsibilities can dampen the urge to move, especially if it means uprooting kids from schools and friends, but they don't kill the drive for a better job. "There aren't many superintendents who can endure the long haul," Hocutt maintains. "As the course ages, so does the irrigation, equipment, labor, budget, members, and then yourself. It becomes tougher the longer you stay in one place."

Out of 100 courses on Pawleys Island, Hocutt knows of only four superintendents who've lasted at one place more than 10 years. "Three years is a safe bet," he said. "It's also a good step up to increase your salary."

### FINDING A HOME

Vince Hankley, the 12-year veteran superintendent at the private Country Club of Petersburg, in Virginia, begs to differ. "I don't think three years is enough time to get your feet wet," he said. "Five or six years should be the minimum to build up

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## Huesgen and Flynn take top jobs at Pebble Beach

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Tom Huesgen has been named head superintendent at the hallowed Pebble Beach Golf Links here on the California coast. He replaces Erik Greytak, who has moved on to Winged Foot Golf Club, in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

At the same time, Chris Flynn has assumed the head superintendent position at Spanish Bay Golf Club, also a Pebble Beach Co. course.

Both moves reflect the company's long tradition of promoting from within.

A graduate of Oregon State, with a degree in turfgrass management, Huesgen transferred in from Spanish Bay, where he had been superintendent since 1998. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America as well as the Northern California Golf Course Superintendents Association.



"Tom is familiar with all of Pebble Beach Company's golf properties and is a talented and experienced superintendent," said Paul Spengler, senior vice president of golf properties. "We're confident in his ability to maintain the integrity and qualities that make Pebble Beach Golf Links one of the most famous courses in the world."

### STARTED AS SPRAY TECHNICIAN

Chris Flynn, most recently assistant superintendent at Spyglass Hill Golf Course, has been with the Pebble Beach Co. since 1998. He was first employed as a spray technician at Spyglass and then promoted to assistant superintendent last August. He holds a degree in turfgrass management from the State University of New York at Cobleskill.

Earlier in his career, Flynn worked at the TPC Course at Las Colinas, in Dallas, Texas; and also at Mahopac Golf Course, Westchester Country Club and Brae Burn Country Club, all in New York.

"Chris has done a great job as assistant superintendent of Spyglass Hill and is ready to take on more responsibilities at Spanish Bay," said RJ Harper, vice president of golf operations for the Pebble Beach organization. "As with Tom Huesgen's promotion, we're delighted to have within our ranks the types of employees who can step right into leadership positions at our world-class golf courses."



## Three-year rule

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confidence with the people you work with.

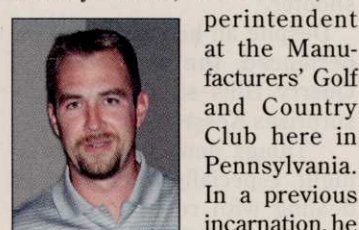
"Long term, you'll have more loyalty from your employer," Hankley added. "There are always times when things don't go as you've planned, and you need a little loyalty from an employer who has the ability to hang in there with you.

"There's something to be said for moving up a little bit to a bigger operating course or paycheck when the opportunity presents itself, but I think everybody should be settling in and trying to find a home," he added. "In my opinion, that should be a career goal — to find a home."

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

If there's a middle ground in this debate, Douglass Larson, thinks he's found it.

"I like to think of it as the three-to-five-year rule," said Larson, superintendent at the Manufacturers' Golf and Country Club here in Pennsylvania.



Doug Larson

In a previous incarnation, he logged five years at the Riverton Country Club in New Jersey. "The advantages to moving," he said, "are the possibly major increases in salary, the new experiences to broaden your knowledge, and the ability to get your name and reputation around."

But Larson also points out the drawbacks of rootlessly roaming through a career. "You never seem to develop a relationship with a club and its membership because they're always waiting for you to fly the coop," he said. "You don't get the stability of family life. And it may also show little job stability to future employers. Then you have the uncertainty of a new club. You have to figure out the philosophy, membership and politics. In your current position, you know all that."

### VANISHING JOB SECURITY

Relationships between employers and employees also play a critical role in job turnover. "There is quite a bit of movement in our industry, and I think a significant amount of that movement is precipitated by employers in the way they treat the superintendent and compensate them with pay and benefits," said Tommy Witt, the new president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Employers may value superintendents, he said, but rarely do they adequately pay them. "Superintendents are looking for that job out there that will compensate them fairly, where they will be viewed as a valuable and

contributing member of the team, and where they'll have a solid relationship with their employer," said Witt, now in his first year as superintendent of the Kiawah Island Golf Club on John's Island, S.C.

In an unstable job market, there's usually a driving force or natural instinct to remain mobile. "I don't think there is such an animal as guaranteed job se-

curity anymore — not in the golf business, not in the magazine business and certainly not in corporate America these days," said Witt.

"Superintendents often have to change jobs to get to the type of



Tommy Witt

course they want to be at — movement is part of the equation," he said. "You're meeting new people, so you're increasing your visibility and networking ability."

### SEEKING A BETTER SITUATION

Before arriving at the Kiawah Island course, Witt started his career by climbing that superintendent ladder: five years at the Bent Tree Country Club in Dallas, Texas; followed by four years

at the Wynstone Golf Club in North Barrington, Ill.; and then three years at the StillWaters Resort in Dadeville, Ala.

"People aren't moving just to be moving," Witt said. "They're trying to find a better situation for themselves.

"The bottom line," he added, "is that superintendents are looking for greater compensation and improved relationships." ■

# THE FUTURE

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