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# GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

*Presents*

# TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

*Starring*

**Dean Graves as The Team Builder**

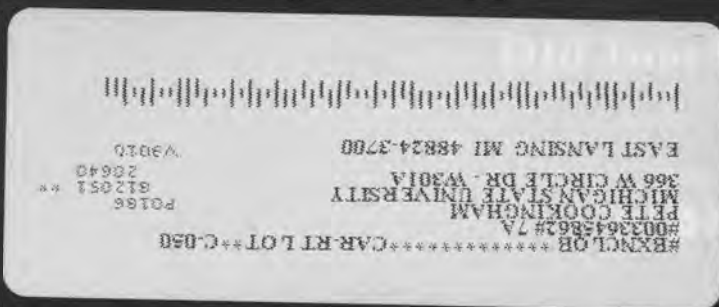
**Leasha Schwab on Women In Turf**

**The Great Monroe Miller in his final GCI role**

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## ONE OF MANY SKILLS

**Y**ou write better than we can maintain turf.

Our second Turfheads Take Over, like the first one, demonstrates perhaps the No. 1 quality GCI readers possess: you're more versatile than a basketball star with an efficient jump shot, deft touch, uncanny vision and penchant for mixing it up inside. That's why we recruited you to do our jobs – and we didn't need shoe company money or sleazy liaisons to secure your commitment. Writing is one segment of your skillset, yet you execute like full-time scribes.

Let's clarify a fallacy before we continue praising our readers ... we didn't take the last month off. When we announced this concept last year, we jokingly suggested we planned to take a late-fall hiatus. We duplicated the lame joke again this year. What can we say? We can never be accused of taking ourselves too seriously.

But we take our work, especially when your names are on it, seriously. This issue required as much, if not more, effort than its 2017 predecessors. Industry professionals are trusting us to properly convey their candid thoughts to a large audience. We treat submissions with tremendous care because we know this might be somebody's one chance to write for a national publication.

We received 13 submissions from all segments of the industry. Superintendents. Assistant superintendents. A retired superintendent. A former superintendent turned territory representative. An association leader. An architect. The diversity of contributors mirrors our readership. GCI strives to cultivate a welcoming atmosphere in print, digital and social media formats.

Contributors required no briefing about our daily goal of producing relatable content because for 11 months they are part of the brilliant group we are trying to reach. They are trying to build teams, hire the right people, convince more females to consider golf industry careers and boost golf's environmental standing, topics examined by Dean Graves, Brian Stiehler, Leasha Schwab and Paul Carter, respectively.

If a few names on the contents page look familiar, it's because Stiehler, Matthew Wharton, Adam Garr and David Beanblossom are making encore appearances. All four are great friends of GCI and wonderful writers. They embody the spirit of the industry, ready to help co-workers, colleagues, partners and magazine editors whenever called upon.

Nathan Crace enjoys writing so much that he's a member of the Golf Writers Association of America. His personal story evokes memories of that moment when golf first mesmerized us, although I can't imagine how my parents would have reacted had I tried building a course in our western Pennsylvania backyard.

Last year's Turfheads Take Over was a rousing success. But it lacked the assistant superintendent perspective. Zach Wike and Mitch Savage, a talented, enthusiastic and committed duo willing to serve the industry in any capacity, changed that for us this year. We also lacked an association perspective last year, so we connected with the Adam Ikamas, the Michigan's GCSA's dedicated leader. Ikamas must have been excited to write for us. He submitted his article three weeks before the deadline!

Quality writing can inspire others while providing therapy for the author. Kevin Hicks accomplished both by openly describing how he handled losing his superintendent job earlier this year. Hicks, to the delight of many, recently accepted an opportunity to join the EarthWorks team.

Finally, and sadly, this issue marks the last regular GCI contribution from the legendary Monroe Miller. Everybody in the industry is better because of Miller's enormous contributions. He's a Hall of Fame husband, father, grandfather, superintendent and Wisconsin Badger fan. We were lucky to have him as part of our team for nine years. If only we could maintain turf as well as he writes. **GCI**



**Guy Cipriano**  
Senior Editor

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GIE Media, Inc.  
5811 Canal Road  
Valley View, Ohio 44125  
Phone: 800-456-0707  
Fax: 216-525-0515

#### EDITORIAL Pat Jones

Publisher/Editorial Director [pjones@gie.net](mailto:pjones@gie.net)

**Mike Zawacki** Editor [mzawacki@gie.net](mailto:mzawacki@gie.net)

**Guy Cipriano** Senior Editor [gcipriano@gie.net](mailto:gcipriano@gie.net)

**Terry Buchen** Technical Editor at-large

**Bruce Williams** Senior Contributing Editor

#### GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

**Jim Blayney** Creative Director

**Caitlin McCoy** Advertising Production Coordinator

#### ADVERTISING/PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

**Kate Pretzlav**

[kpretzlav@gie.net](mailto:kpretzlav@gie.net) • 216-393-0229

#### SALES

**Russell Warner** National Account Manager  
[rwarnar@gie.net](mailto:rwarnar@gie.net) • 216-393-0293

**Craig Thorne** Account Manager  
[cthorne@gie.net](mailto:cthorne@gie.net) • 216-393-0232

**Bonnie Velikonya** Classified Sales  
[bvelikonya@gie.net](mailto:bvelikonya@gie.net) • 216-393-0291

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The Palmer Course at PGA National Resort & Spa reopened in November, giving the five-course facility a fresh offering for members and resort guests.

# Churn, burn, renovate

One of the busiest places in golf joins the South Florida construction frenzy.

By Guy Cipriano

**ARROWS ON A CLOCKPOST** between two clubhouses, a 25,000-square foot putting green, and the 10th tee and 18th green of a PGA Tour course point PGA National Resort & Spa members and guests in nine directions. A bevy of starting points suggest the agronomic team experiences few lulls.

Brad Nelson leads the agronomic department. His team consists of 100

employees who maintain five courses supporting 160,000 annual rounds. Members are responsible for 100,000 rounds; resort guests the other 60,000.

The PGA Tour's Honda Classic visit the Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., grounds every winter. Or, as residents quip, the PGA Tour visits where players live. It's estimated that half of the world's top 150 players own a home in South Florida. A week on the

Champion Course, home of a hazard-laden three-hole stretch known as The Bear Trap, represents a matter of competitive convenience.

The resort hosts some form of regular play all 52 weeks. Yes, 20-handicappers from Brooklyn and Boston are playing at PGA National the same time as Rickie and Rory, albeit on different courses. When you have five courses in a warm-weather



From left to right: John Flynn, Jeff Shaffer, Bill Diorio, Brad Nelson, Jeremiah Lockhart and Andrew Wilson are among the leaders of PGA National Resort & Spa's 100-member agronomic team.

market, the play and subsequent agronomic work never stops. "It's churn and burn," Nelson says.

Nelson and his team, along with Arnold Palmer Design Company senior golf course architect/vice president Brandon Johnson and South Florida-based Superior Golf Concepts, recently burned through a renovation, completing enhancements on the Palmer Course in less than six months. The group endured a common weather challenge, a steamy and soggy summer, followed by atypical weather challenges, Hurricane Irma and 21 more inches of fall rain in a 30-day stretch. The course reopened to resort guests in early November. Less than three weeks after the Palmer reopened, Nelson's team overseeded the Champion as construction of Honda Classic infrastructure commenced.

Irma made landfall Sunday, Sept. 10, and Nelson devoted his crew to quickly reopening one course. The Champion Course was the first to reopen, welcoming golfers at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 13.

Grassing of the Palmer's TifEagle greens concluded Aug. 1; grassing

the Celebration fairways concluded Aug. 15. Even with part of a hurricane touching fragile turf, the course's reopening coincided with the period customer demand begins spiking. Nelson's job requires constant delegating and Palmer superintendent Bill Diorio also serves in the same capacity on the Fazio, the second course to reopen following Irma. Assistant superintendent Andrew Wilson "lived" the project from April to October, Nelson says. Johnson lauded the PGA National team for simultaneously handling storm recovery and a grow-in.

"It was a very smooth, organized project," Johnson says. "The unforeseen thing was the hurricane in the end. All the credit goes to Brad Nelson and his staff for overcoming the hurricane. One golf course is bad enough. They have five. They have to get something open while something is growing in. I can't imagine the amount of work and man hours they put in just to get back and maintain it, let alone to continue to grow it in and get it ready for opening."

Planning for the renovation started in 2016. To prepare for the new turf and construction, the course closed

for more than two weeks last November so the crew could spray glyphosate on greens, fairways and all other short grass. Members and guests played on an overseeded greens and fairways last winter.

The Palmer opened in 1984, but year-round play and the necessary maintenance to accommodate the activity fatigued the course. After initial digging and inspecting, they discovered every putting surface had decreased in size. The front right section of the 18th green, for example, had lost almost 2,000 square feet through 33 years of regular maintenance. Slowly changing features are common among Florida courses built in the 1980s, according to Johnson.

"If you think 30 years is a short period of time, you have to really look at it differently," Johnson says. "Thirty years of not doing anything to a golf course besides regular, routine maintenance means greens are going to shrink, tees are going to morph. Technology in the game also has changed, technology with the types of grasses has changed, technology in mowing equipment has changed. You're seeing a lot of clubs and courses taking advantage of these advances."

Bunkers are a major component on almost every golf course project in 2017. Higher sand lines on the Palmer's 62 bunkers provide golfers with fresh sights and strategic options. White sand in bunkers and coquina waste areas create visual contrasts on multiple holes.

Improving the golf product is critical to PGA National's success. The number of facilities in Florida has swelled past 1,000, with the region from Miami to Port St. Lucie supporting the equivalent of 268 18-hole courses, according to National Golf Foundation data.

"If you don't keep investing and moving the needle forward and offering what other people are offering, you will get swallowed up," Nelson says. "We know that. We have to invest to keep moving the product along."

## Meanwhile, across the street ...

Further evidence of the South Florida reinvestment movement lurks across PGA Boulevard from PGA National Resort & Spa.

The Country Club at Mirasol recently unveiled its updated Sunrise Course to members. The work, which director of golf course maintenance Michael Thomas calls a "facelift," started May 1 and ended in early fall on a Tom Fazio-designed course that opened in 2003. Hurricane Irma delayed the reopening, but Mirasol is a 36-hole facility, so Thomas and his team hustled to repair the Sunset Course following the storm to give members an immediate golf option.

The Sunrise's condition after Irma solidified the reasons behind the facelift. The bunkers endured the punishment without any problems, Thomas says. Upward amplification promoting the outward flow of water was emphasized during construction. Crews installed liners beneath faces, but not bases. The presence of 2-inch low-flow pipe below bases provides additional drainage.

A tight construction window led to the sodding of fairways and tees with Celebration Bermudagrass. The existing Tifsport on fairways was cut, rolled and reused in areas such as green, bunker and tee surrounds, and exit and entrance points.

"We had challenges and we had some needs we wanted to meet," Thomas says. "You have to reinvent what you have. As a superintendent, you always look at everything differently. You have to re-create. And if you don't have the product, you have to create the product. You have to figure out how to make it work."

Thomas and his team are playing a vital role in improving Mirasol's golf offerings. The club enhanced its practice facilities in 2015 and the Sunset, originally designed by Arthur Hills and opened in 2001, will receive a facelift next year. Mirasol's reinvestment



The Country Club at Mirasol's Sunrise Course received a "facelift" as the club continues to invest in improvements.

extends beyond the golf areas, with the clubhouse and fitness, spa, tennis and aquatics facilities receiving \$40 million of work in 2016.

"It's super important to stay current with what's happening and to understand the demographic or your membership and what their needs are," Thomas says. "Here we are, 14 years after opening a golf course, doing a facelift on it. We didn't replace the full irrigation and we didn't do all these other things, because the infrastructure is good enough to get us through another 10 years. The reality is that we can do a little plastic surgery to enhance what we already have, give us a competitive advantage for the type of membership that we have and then in another decade we can talk about the next renovation."

## Tartan Talks No. 17

The teenager called the legendary architect once. He called him again. Ray Hearn finally reached Robert Trent Jones Sr. on his 30th attempt.

Hearn reveals the dynamics of the phone call and



how he transitioned from assistant superintendent to architect in a Tartan Talks episode. Jones urged Hearn to begin his career in maintenance because it would help an aspiring architect understand that "every little squiggle will have a ramification." Heeding Jones' advice, Hearn received a turfgrass science degree from Michigan State and started his career as an assistant superintendent at Country



Club of Detroit.

Hearn, who later received a landscape architecture degree, also conveys stories from four recent projects in the podcast. Enter <https://goo.gl/YzEFYa> into your browser to hear the conversation.



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*The grounds staff of Liberty National Golf Club,  
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# Trent



**David Beanblossom** is the superintendent at Chariot Run Golf Course in Laconia, Ind.



Daniel Trent Williams has worked his way up from a crew member to crew leader to spray tech at Chariot Run Golf Course.

## “Who would have ever thought being a meth cook would have prepared me for a job as a spray tech?”


**T**hat’s the best line I’ve ever heard from anyone in the turf business and it came from one Daniel Trent Williams. Some may read that and think there’s no way that guy is spraying anything for me, but I look at it as a life rescued from the abyss. Trent’s life is a road few have traveled and made it out of. Drugs, addiction, jail, prison, chains of sin and death had him bound, but this story doesn’t end there. His final chapter hasn’t been written yet. Look at his life now, and you see freedom from addiction and someone try-

ing to make a difference in others’ lives. Most have heard of jailhouse religion and think they won’t make it when they get out, but look at Trent and you’ll see that one life transformed is worth all the money and time spent for those who don’t make it.

Grace Tabernacle is the church that sits next to hole 15 at Chariot Run and the Transformation House was birthed from it. Meth and heroin abuse is running rampant in our county and after seeing people get out of jail and fall right back into the same habits, Grace started out with

a halfway house for guys to go to after being released that would give them a real chance for success. Trent is one of those guys. Two years after completing the transformation program, Trent is now one of the leaders of one of the four houses that is now the Butterfly Transformation House program. We have been able to give jobs to eight men and women from the houses, and I hope that is just the start. These young men and women are thankful for a fresh start, love the work environment and appreciate the fact someone would take a chance on them. Trent is the only one who has stayed at the course for more than a season. The rest ALL moved on to better paying jobs. Yeah, that’s right. We’re batting 1,000. And Trent . . . I can’t say enough good things about him. He’s a rockstar without the drug abuse. He helps me out, too. His presence keeps crashing my walk with the Lord in check because I don’t want to let him down. I want to be someone he can count on, too.

Trent has worked his way up from a crew member to a crew leader to spray tech. When the spray tech job came open, Trent immediately stepped up and said, “I can do this, I’ve got experience ‘mixing chemicals.’” He understands the importance of having the right amount of each product in the tank and as his first season as spray tech comes to a close, I couldn’t be prouder of him. When he first started working at Chariot Run, I honestly didn’t think he would make it. But I’m so glad he proved me wrong. Trent doesn’t take any of the credit, he gives the glory to God. Why am I telling you about Trent? I hope it will open someone’s eyes and you will give someone a chance you normally wouldn’t. All the clichés work here, but the final thought I want to leave you with is don’t judge a book by its cover. In today’s ever challenging times of finding quality staff members, some of the best are right in front of our eyes. They just need a chance. **GCI**

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# FROM ONE TURFHEAD TO ANOTHER



**Monroe Miller** retired after 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk CC in Madison, Wis. He is a recipient of the 2004 USGA Green Section Award, the 2009 GCSAA Col. John Morley DSA Award, and is the only superintendent in the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame. Reach him at [groots@charter.net](mailto:groots@charter.net).

In his final regular GCI contribution, Monroe Miller describes the path Dr. Kimberly Erusha took to land the USGA's top agronomic position.

**I**t was a somewhat startling statistic when I read it – there are more women enrolled in the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences than men. Back in the early 1970s, I was a grad student teaching assistant in Soil Science 301 and there was rarely more than one or two young women in the class. The same could be said for most of the traditional agricultural classes. Today, in fact, there are more women in some of those same departments than men – and medical schools at some universities have more women than men, too.

And in my time in the military, it was rare to see a woman in any position other than nursing. Today, a future commander of my VFW Post, a lieutenant colonel, is a woman. She commanded a company in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, taught computer science at West Point for three years and is an Afghanistan veteran. Although she is near retirement, she heads the Army ROTC program at Wisconsin.

I have seen a lot of changes in opportunities for women, changes for the best. My three children – all daughters – have experienced won-

derful opportunities to be whatever they wanted to be. I've also noticed that often times women in formally all-male professions and positions present an attitude of "whatever you can do, I can do better!" And they are right. In the world of golf, I have seen a lot of change at golf courses and golf clubs. In my view, the game has been ahead of other segments of American life. At the club that employed me for almost 40 years, we've had women presidents and women's organizations. I was there for the first female member of the green committee, and these days there would be a thought that they absolutely need to be part of that committee. Their positions in golf clubs reflect their positions in society. It has been a positive change for all of us.

We have had the LPGA for years, and I predict the day will come when women will compete on the PGA Tour. The USGA has many women events, and who can forget when Judy Bell was USGA president and represented golf so well. Our current president, Diana Murphy, completes her second year as president early next year. The executive committee



and board will likely produce another woman as president in the future.

We have been a little slow, however, seeing women choose golf course management as a career. That may be why some were a little surprised when Dr. Kimberly Erusha



Dr. Kimberly Erusha has been at the forefront of information dissemination for the USGA Green Section. Starting as associate editor of the print edition of the Green Section Record to the multitude of information options available today, she has played a big part in how turfheads receive information.

was selected to succeed Jim Snow as managing director of the USGA Green Section. That was more a case of not knowing her rather than gender. Let me tell you a little about her.

Kim is pure Midwest. Walford, Iowa (pop. 275 in her youth) is

her hometown. Her father was the banker in town and her mother was busy at home raising Kim, her three sisters and her three brothers. She credits her parents for her love of the outdoors, tagging along with her father when he was fishing or just

working around their home. Her mother always had a large garden and her parents' farm was located not far outside of town.

Although Walford is just a short drive from the University of Iowa, Kim chose Iowa's land grant college



As the Green Section's leader, Erusha is proud to be part of a department that works tirelessly for the improvement of golf.

in Ames – Iowa State University. Iowa State was where her family traditionally attended college; five of her siblings are grads. She gravitated to science and math courses, and declared horticulture as a major. Dr. Nick Christians was her undergrad advisor and she selected turf as a specialty.

Kim claims not to be an “intellectual” and earned her good grades through hard work and study. Like most of her generation, a college degree was meant to lead to a job. After graduation, she went to work for a

lawn care company in Des Moines. The “hands on” practical experience was valuable to her future career with the USGA Green Section.

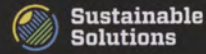
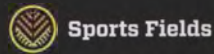
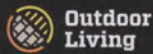
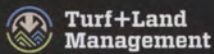
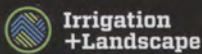
After two years in the field, she called Christians about career options. It was a timely call. He had just visited with Dr. Robert Shearman of the turf faculty at Nebraska. When all was said and done, she matriculated to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an IPM program with Shearman.

Ever the banker's daughter, she also started grad school since full-time employees could take classes for one dollar per credit! Her time at Nebraska resulted in a MS degree, immediately followed by a Ph.D. Her career with the USGA Green Section began immediately following completion of her degree

requirements.

Kim's academic family tree is impressive. She was Shearman's student; he was Dr. James B Beard's student and Beard was Dr. Bill Daniel's student. All are well known in our profession, and all are recipients of the USGA Green Section Award. Add in her undergrad advisor, Christians, and the result is a pedigree few can match.

Her interview with now retired Green Section national director Jim Snow was successful and she was hired as a technical writer for the Green Section. Her parents drove her to Far Hills, N.J., and helped her find a place to live. She started in November 1990. This was a time of a lot of turf research in the U.S., and we were beginning to see major changes in the way we get information. Kim has been at the forefront of information dissemination for the Green Section



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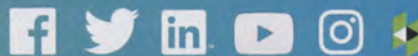


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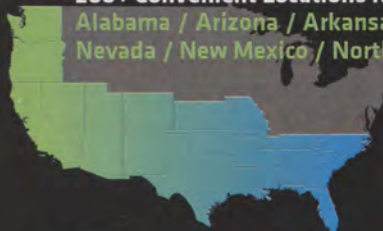
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and the USGA. Starting as associate editor of the print edition of the Green Section Record to the multitude of information options available today, she has played a big part in the changes. Online resources have been especially important since the downturn in the economy and golf during the early 2000s. She quickly saw the curtailment in travel money for education and worked to offer options. Always willing to speak at conferences and meetings, she used the podium to “get the word out.”

From the early beginnings of Turfgrass Information File (TGIF) to every imaginable information source available in a superintendent’s office these days, Kim has been a moving force. From her view, the USGA and the Green Section exist to help develop better turf for better golf. She has been very successful in this mission.

Given her early career success, it was a wise move by the USGA to promote her to the managing director position in 2010 when Snow retired. And there was strong precedent for a woman directing and managing the Green Section in Dr. Fanny-Fern Davis. Davis, somewhat like Kim, started her time at the Green Section as a writer and editor. She also was a research botanist and an advisory specialist for the Green Section. In 1943, she became acting director of the Green Section and kept with it until 1945 when she resigned to take care of her ailing father and to raise her three children. She was honored with the Green Section Award in 1975. Not surprisingly, FFD was a child of the Midwest also, born in Illinois and educated in St. Louis.

Gertrude A. Farley is another woman who held a prominent place in golf turf, a decade-and-a-half before Davis. Although she only held a two-year degree, she was hired by the team of Drs. Piper and Oakley a little more than a year after the

## USGA GREEN SECTION LEADERS

**Dr. Charles V. Piper,**  
1920-26  
Chairman of Green Section

**Dr. John Monteith, Jr.,**  
1928-42  
Director of Green Section

**Dr. Fanny-Fern Davis,**  
1938-42  
Botanist  
1942-45  
Director of Green Section

**Dr. Fred Grau,**  
1945-53  
Director of Green Section

**Dr. Marvin H. Ferguson,**  
1953-68  
National Research Coordinator

**Alexander Radko,**  
1970-76  
Research Director  
1976-81  
National Director

**William Bengueyfield,**  
1982-90,  
National Director

**James T Snow,**  
1990-2011  
National Director

**Dr. Kimberly Erusha,**  
2011-present  
Managing Director

USGA Green Section was formed. She worked for the Cleveland Golf District and was the first of the local Green Section secretaries. Her book, “Golf Course Commonsense,” was the first turfgrass book written by a woman. I have a friend and colleague who was kind enough to loan me his copy of this rare book twice so I could read (and reread) it. Outstanding does not adequately describe this 1931 book.

Leading up to the 2017 U.S. Open at Erin Hills, the USGA featured a TV promo ad of an enthusiastic golfer playing in a foursome. Dressed in an argyle sweater and swinging her club with gusto, Kim was clearly enjoying the game. She was practicing the old Arnold Palmer saw, “hit it hard, go find it and hit it again.”

My wife and I had lunch with Kim and USGA Green Section agronomist Bob Vavrek on the first day of U.S. Open competition. She came into the food tent with a barrette in her hair to keep it out of her eyes, and she looked as though she had been working on the golf course. She had been since well before daylight!

Since the Green Section’s inception in 1920, the USGA has been committed to turf research and giving back to the game. It is not always noticed or popular, but the staff has stayed true to the course. The combination of research, course consulting and development of education multimedia are the foundation of everything the Green Section does today. There is no difference whether a golf course budget is large or small; the staff focus is to help golf facilities develop to their full potential. Kim is proud to be part of the Green Section department that works tirelessly for the improvement of golf.

I was good friends with former directors of the Green Section – Snow and Bill Bengueyfield, and I knew Al Radko. All did an excellent job in the position, and Kim is cut from that same golf course turf swath. She has seven years in the position and I hope she has another 20 to go. Given her energy and enthusiasm, I wouldn’t be surprised. **GCI**

*Monroe Miller spent 36 years as the superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. He is the recipient of the 2004 USGA Green Section Award and the 2009 GCSAA Col. John Morley DSA Award. He started writing a regular column for GCI in 2009.*





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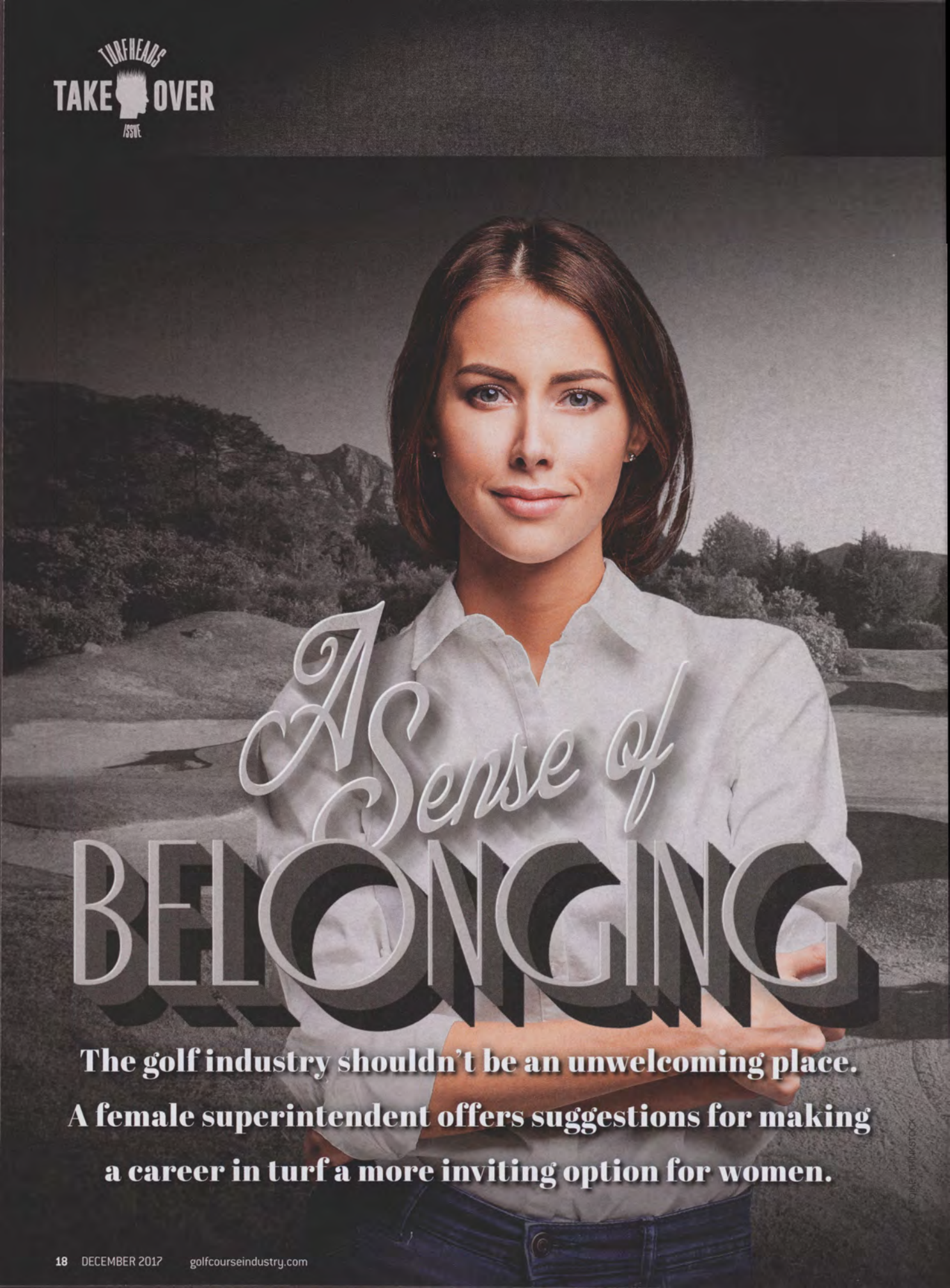
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*A Sense of*  
**BELONGING**

**The golf industry shouldn't be an unwelcoming place.  
A female superintendent offers suggestions for making  
a career in turf a more inviting option for women.**

**T**he issue of diversity within the golf industry is a complex topic. Why is there a lack of women in golf? Why aren't there more women in leadership roles in golf? And, finally, how do we give women the opportunity to excel in this industry?

This fall, I attended an event for Women in Golf at the Toronto Ladies Club hosted by Bayer. As I was chatting with these successful, driven women, I started thinking that maybe diversity within golf was fine, maybe I was being a bit dramatic. All these women were excelling in their careers. But then we started talking about women they knew who had left the industry or the hurdles they had been forced to overcome. The reality is those women at that table are the ones who persevered despite obstacles they encountered in their career path. They are the women who were fortunate to have a mentor genuinely interested in their success. On the other hand, they are the women who don't want to rock the boat. They got to where they are, and they want to stay there. If there wasn't an issue with lack of diversity, then we wouldn't have a lack of diversity. It's pretty simple. This gave me the inspiration to try and rock that boat. This article is the first step.

This is not about taking a job at the well-educated, hard-

working men who hold most of the jobs in this industry. It's not about making a switch to 50 percent women as employees and managers. It's about how do we get the women with talent – and with turf as their passion – the opportunities to excel and make turf their lifelong career aspiration. How do we break down the barriers and make the golf business a place that attracts the best of the best? Some would say a woman needs to be feisty, she needs to be persistent, put her career before everything, work harder than any man and prove herself. But isn't that the problem? She may immediately put herself in a place where everybody, including herself, thinks she needs to prove that she is as good as any man out there by being overly assertive and dominant. This may cause her to be perceived as difficult to work with or pushy, whereas many men with these attributes are considered hard working and driven.

"Working in a male-dominated field does have its challenges," says Marie

Thorne, senior turf specialist at Syngenta Canada. "Women that know their stuff, exude self-confidence (not aggressiveness), earn trust from their male counterparts and get involved in the industry are very likely to succeed. At times you do need thick skin, and I've been very blessed to have mentors throughout my career to provide guidance."



**Leasha Schwab** is the superintendent at Pheasant Run Golf Course in Sharon, Ontario.

#### LOOK WITHIN

There's also the issue of general managers concerned that employees within their establishment won't be able to "accept" or "handle" having a women leader. They may be concerned about having to deal with any potential sexual harassment or power struggle issues, therefore they may choose to avoid these issues rather than taking them head on. If we want this industry to not only survive but thrive, it is imperative not to shy away from these subjects. If there is concern about a crew not accepting a woman, it's time to delve into the present dynamic of your work force and ascertain why this may be. If there's a concern about sexual harassment, ask yourself why you're worried and go from there. The fear of sexual harassment should never be a factor in whether

anybody is passed over for a position.

We as women need to not compromise our leadership role while at the same time being strong and unwilling to waiver in our morals. Dealing with harassment is something I've

known all too well in this industry and part of me is ashamed to say that after 15 years last year was the first time I stood up for myself. Even then, my biggest fear was that my peers would view me as somebody who can't "hang with the guys" or that they need to watch what they say around me. I am very fortunate to have great mentors who believed in me and helped me overcome these fears. I have a deep concern for women new to the industry without mentors – or ones that feel secluded – and I wonder how they would persevere. Any man who messages a woman superintendent to let her know how "hot" she looks in her profile picture (yes, this happens), asks if she's single, attends a trade show and asks whose wife she is, and thinks twice about hiring a woman as a manager because you're worried about the men is 100 percent part of the problem.

Many in the golf industry can agree that sometimes we can all get caught up in our jobs. When we were younger

and new to this industry, it was driven into us that you should be working at least 12-hour days and, if not, it meant you didn't have the passion for the business. I believe that sometimes men can see long working hours as a challenge, whereas women wonder how they can sustain this work ethic, especially if there is any thought of starting a family. So, instead, they bow out. Women are still more likely to be the stay at home parent, so where does being a golf course superintendent fit in? Some would say it seems impossible, and I used to think that. But it's not. It's about planning, acceptance and working together. It's about general managers trusting the person they hired to do what's right for the golf course when that time comes. It is completely possible to do both. You don't need to work 12-hour days every day to be a driven, motivated superintendent.

"With my husband and I both being in the industry, we knew having a family would be challenging," says Jasmine Halk, assistant superintendent at the Briars Golf Course and wife of The Donalda Golf Club superintendent Paul Halk. "With the support of our employers, colleagues and family, we were able to adjust our schedules to accommodate for daycare and strike a good work-life balance."

In my opinion, a lot of these issues, including moving forward in this industry, come down to the same couple of questions. What are your goals in the turf industry? How do you want to change this industry in a positive and progressive



Superintendent Leasha Schwab has created a welcoming environment for her team at Pheasant Run Golf Course.

way? Many of us got to where we are by working hard and sometimes it's difficult to step away from that and peer into the future. My goal is to hire and encourage people who have a passion for this industry, irrespective of gender. In doing so, you will attract and retain women because the "right person" has no gender bias. That could come in many forms. Maybe I don't have many women on my crew because I don't get resumes from women, but what can I do to attract women into the turf industry? Perhaps I could go to high schools and talk about the profession to young women as motivation for them to pursue higher education in a turf related field. As with anything in life, it comes down to the people within an industry to make it what they want. So, once again as a turf professional, how do you want to see our industry evolve?

#### OFFER SUPPORT

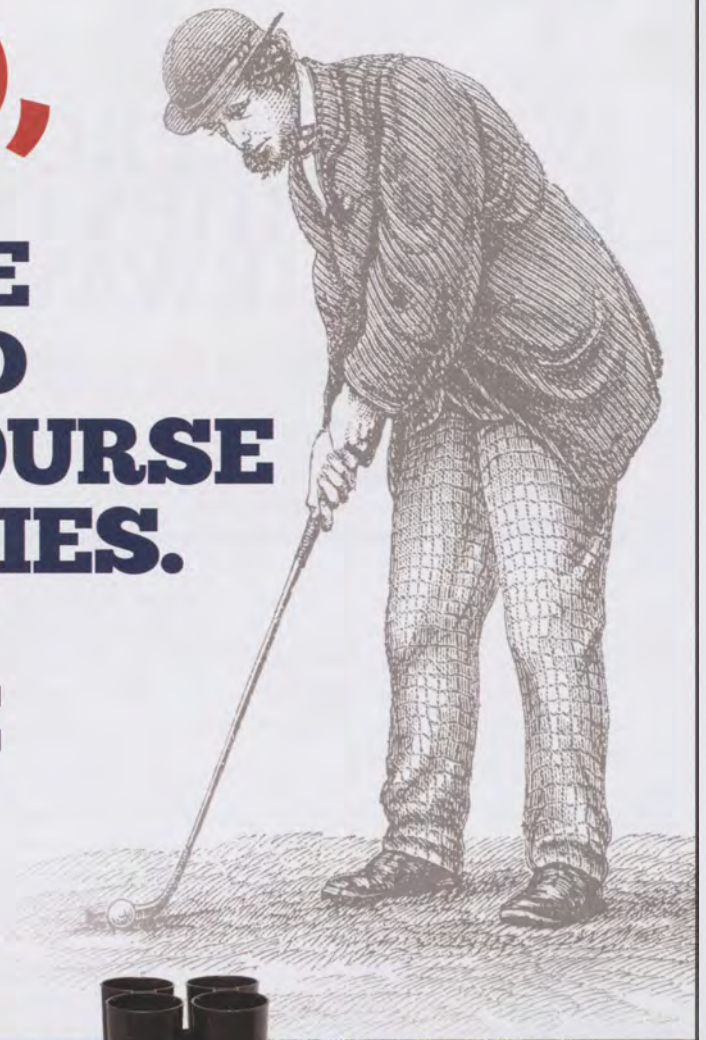
I can attest that the most important thing when I was starting into my career was support, support, support. I had a few really good mentors who made me feel like I could do anything. I had a group of superintendents who took me under their wing and went out of their way to wave me over at a trade show to sit with them. They made me feel like part of the team, were always happy to answer my questions (and still are) and didn't make me feel like they were just being nice because I was the token female. These men are leaders and I can't thank them enough. I was 19 years old and absolutely terrified when I got my first assistant superintendent job. I went to my first conference and no matter how you split it, being the only women in a room full of men is intimidating. Support and mentorship gives

you the strength to overcome when a guy that's worked at your golf course walks out the day you take over, somebody writes a letter to the owners saying they won't work for you, somebody makes a pass at you at your first trade show or insinuates that you haven't become successful "authentically." Do I need to spell this out? To anybody thinking, "I can't make a difference with diversity in this huge industry," yes, you absolutely can.

We each have the ability to encourage women in this industry and to show them that it can be a viable and rewarding career path. Don't pigeonhole them by immediately placing them on garden duty because that's perceived to be more of a woman's role.

It's quite conceivable that she could be interested in much more than that, given the opportunity. If there is a young woman at a turf educational conference or leading a course close to you, reach out and give her your support. Introduce yourself and encourage her to network and become involved in industry events. You may find the role of mentor as one of the most rewarding roles in your life. When I was unsure about a situation on my own golf course, I often asked my peers what they would do, and they are generally very happy and supportive to share their thoughts and experiences in similar situations. That gave me the courage to continue to ask questions and learn. You could be the difference between a young woman feeling very isolated in a male-dominated industry or feeling like she 100 percent belongs there. **GCI**

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# WISDOM FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE FAIRWAY



**Adam Garr** is a territory manager and a former Michigan superintendent.

**L**ast winter, I had the opportunity to speak to a classroom full of future turf managers. I've been blessed to have enjoyed success on the superintendent side and now the sales side of this industry, so I saw it as an opportunity to educate them with some hard-knock experience from two industry perspectives. I call it having wisdom from both sides of the fairway.

## 1. DO NOTHING

Sometimes reacting in the heat of the moment can make a small mistake an even bigger mistake. Stepping back, reevaluating the situation and getting a second opinion may actually triumph over trying to do too much.

## 2. THE GOLDEN RULE APPLIES

Treating others how you would want to be treated is more than a lesson we learned in kindergarten, it's the way we should live our day to day lives. Be kind to your assistants, your staff, your peers and other industry professionals.

## 3. LEAD BY EXAMPLE

You shouldn't ever ask anyone to do something you aren't willing to do yourself.

## 4. "DO LESS WITH LESS"

I've been in a lot of offices over the last three years, and you meet plenty of guys trying to do "more with less." **YOU CAN'T DO MORE WITH LESS.** You can't spray more acres with less fungicide, you can't get more jobs done on a weekend with

less staff and you can't cut more grass with less mowers. You will do less with less. Fight for the budget items you need to keep intact.

## 5. FILL IN YOUR OWN BLANKS

If you don't provide the information, then someone else will. You need to be your own advocate in the locker room and pro shop. Don't give the 1 percent of the loudest members the opportunity to guess why you topdressed greens the day before a tournament. Give them the information before they have the chance to make it up themselves.

## 6. BE PROFESSIONAL

We are all a reflection of the industry we work in. Look the part. Act the part. Keep appointments. Bite your tongue. Be prepared and organized. This rule also applies to — ahem — social media.

## 7. ASK FOR HELP

We are all in this together. Nobody wants to see a fellow superintendent fail. If you have a question, you shouldn't hesitate to ask your neighbor up the street, your local



association or a trusted sales person. The greatest part of being in this industry is how supportive our peers are when there is someone in need.

### 8. MOTHER NATURE IS THE BOSS

I once made the mistake of thinking that I was in charge of anything that happened on the golf course – and then we had a record-setting winter that took out half the greens.

The experience humbled me, and in the

long run it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me professionally. Never forget that Mother Nature always has the final say, and that you are just there to clean up the mess. On her good days, you will look great. On her bad days, well, you will do a great job trying to make it look like it never happened.

### 9. NO FREE LUNCH

There are no “easy jobs” in this industry. The sales side can be as much of a grind as pulling a hose around on a green. Sales people, contrary to some popular belief, take their jobs very seriously and work very hard. The demands may not be physical, but they are mentally challenging and just as stressful to the human condition. Take it from someone who has lived both sides.

### 10. KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENTS

I was absolutely guilty of this during my superintendent days – blowing off appointments at the last minute when something came up. Something will always come up. Keep your appointments and maintain your professionalism. When possible, give advanced notice. Sales people have a schedule to keep, too. A cancelled appointment may not be a big deal to you, but it could send the other person’s day into a tailspin.

### 11. WRITE IT DOWN AND MAKE IT REAL

Your dreams and aspirations aren’t real until you make them real. Write them down. Set clearly defined goals and put them where you see them every day. Share your aspirations and goals with someone you trust and make them hold you accountable. Otherwise, they’re

always just going to be dreams.

### 12. BE CAREFUL

The work day moves fast and we find ourselves moving even faster to always stay one step ahead. Working early in the morning on dangerous equipment, one small mistake can cause serious injury if you aren’t being careful. I have broken two fingers and one toe in my lifetime, and it all happened on the golf course because I was moving too fast or trying to race golfers. Slow it down.

### 13. WEAR A HAT

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, according to the CDC. Let’s face it, the job is outside. Cover yourself up and wear sunscreen at all times. Take care of yourself, for your sake and for your family’s sake.

### 14. BALANCE YOURSELF

We work tons of hours and throw everything we have into this profession because we love it, we take great pride in our work, and we have the passion for what we do. Just make sure to leave the best of you for your family. You should work equally hard to balance the demands of the job with your family. They need you more than the golf course ever will, and never forget that the golf course does not love you back.

### 15. LOOK UP

We spend a lot of our time looking down. Looking at diseased turf, looking at stressed turf and looking for problems. Take a minute and look up. Look around you and try to focus on some of the positives. Enjoy a sunrise and admire the mowing patterns. You’re working hard and doing a great job. Take a moment to appreciate it. **GCI**

ILLUSTRATION: ADROACH

# NOW WHAT?



After 14 years as the superintendent at Coeur d'Alene [Idaho] Resort golf course, **Kevin Hicks** was recently hired as a regional agronomist for EarthWorks.

**A**fter 25 years as a superintendent, I recently found myself in an all too familiar position as many of us do as we approach the age of 50 ... unemployed. Now what?

For starters, I took a few days to rest and clear my head. I started hiking the mountain behind my house that I hadn't climbed in over four years. That helped get me back in mental, as well as physical shape. Next, I took full advantage of the connections I had developed over the course of my career to both let people know I was OK and looking for work.

## FREE AGENT

After some deliberation, I decided that my professional connections on social media could really help navigate the opportunities that I may or may not know about. I declared my "free agency" on Twitter as I've felt that platform has been extremely effective at sharing everything we deal with in the world of turf. But I could not recall anyone using it to announce they'd been fired. What the heck, worth a try, right? Putting myself out there a bit more than some would be willing? Yep. Worth the risk? You bet. Both the outpouring of support as well as several leads were almost immediate. I am so thankful I took the risk of looking like a failure in front of the turf world as it became the first step to healing and moving on. After 14 years in a very high-

stress position, I needed it.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Next came the tough stuff. Do I want to find another superintendent position or explore other options? The reality was that with a son in his junior year of college, another in his senior year of high school and our youngest in middle school, moving wasn't the best option. Ironically, the majority of job offers that came to me were for more sales positions than farming turf. I guess others thought I'd be good at that, even if I hadn't considered it. As I worked through that, it made me realize that if that was the path I was to follow, I'd like to do something that made a difference and helped young superintendents navigate the world I'd been a part of for over a quarter-century. Let's face it, the business is changing. Regulations, staffing and budgets are getting tougher to manage. I've felt for some time that we need to be moving voluntarily toward more sustainable turf management before someone else dictates it to us. A lot of us have things to offer to the rest of the industry. We just need to crawl out of our collective caves and spread the great news of our business. Other things that came to light those first few weeks of free agency were the realization that I had really forsaken my family, my health, my vacation time and even my home upkeep (I quickly discovered that all of the gutters on my house were completely non-functioning). I needed to be removed

from my "life" at the course to see that my priorities were completely screwed up. Some of us just aren't as self-aware as others.

## MOVING FORWARD

As I move forward, my lessons learned are as follows:

- Put yourself out there with association service, writing, blogging and social media participation. You never know which connection might lead you to your next job. I sure didn't.
- No matter how much criticism you endure at your job, believe in your abilities. They hired you for your expertise and knowledge. Be confident in that.
- Be open to all kinds of new opportunities. Many of us run our golf courses with an entrepreneurial mindset. Why not do the same with our career?
- Take your vacation time and work fewer hours. The course will still be there when you get back.
- We're our own worst enemies when it comes to the golf course. Give yourself some grace and stop and smell the roses once in a while.
- Focus more on the positives of the jobs, not the negatives. Developing dozens of student interns and assistants through the years and presenting very good playing conditions are something I should be very proud of.
- Constantly reinvent yourself. This came from John Chessard at Lehigh Country Club and couldn't be more spot on.
- Develop your network of local superintendents and friends. You're better off with them than by yourself.

Going forward, no matter what I decide to do, I know I'll have the support of my family and a great community of turfheads. Onward and upward! **GCI**





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# TOUT YOUR COURSE'S ENVIRONMENTAL

# PROWESS

*By*

**Paul Carter**

**Looking to win the PR battle golf often faces?**

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**Paul Carter, CGCS,** is the superintendent at The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay in Harrison, Tenn.

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ance the needs of the golfers and the golf course with the needs of the environment and the inhabitants of the course.

In an effort to better educate ourselves and to give our environmental programs and practices some credibility, we began several years ago to look at independent third-party environmental certification programs. The certification programs provide us with valuable ideas and information, as well as support and credibility. No longer are we saying our programs and practices are the correct way to do things simply because that is what we say but rather we have verification from well-respected and vetted outside organizations which put their stamp of approval on our property.

There are many environmental certification programs available to golf course superintendents and property managers, all having their own strengths and merits, but we chose to partner with three programs in particular. Audubon International, Golf Environment Organization and The Groundwater Foundation are the independent third-party certification programs we chose, each for their own strengths and area of expertise, but also for their level of support and industry recognition.

Each organization brings something different and unique to our environmental certification portfolio. Audubon International is well recognized in our industry and through the Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf we have been able to gain information

and strategies for environmental projects on our golf course. Golf Environment Organization gives a broader look at the property looking at all aspects of our impact on the environment from the clubhouse to the golf course to our community involvement. The Groundwater Foundation, through their Groundwater Guardian Green Site program, provides us information and support and recognizes us for our efforts to protect and preserve groundwater both on and surrounding the golf course.

### A CERTIFICATION TRIFECTA

#### AUDUBON INTERNATIONAL

[www.auduboninternational.org](http://www.auduboninternational.org)  
 Audubon International is probably the most well known third-party environmental certification program for golf courses and communities in the United States. Although they are not associated with all of the over 500 entities that use the word "Audubon" when it comes to conversations within the golf course community, when you say "Audubon" most everyone knows you are speaking about Audubon International.

Audubon International gained great prominence when in 1987 Mr. Ronald Dodson brought the program of the Audubon Society of New York State back to life from a 50-year hibernation. The environmental programs provided by the Audubon Society of New York State quickly grew to impact properties outside of the state of New York and in 1996

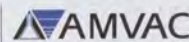
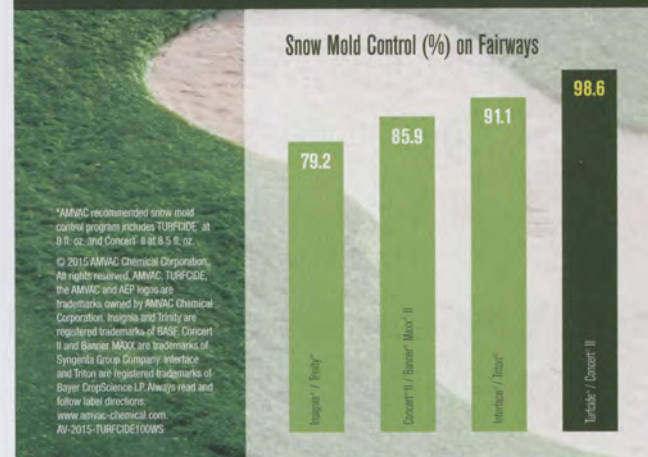


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# GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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Audubon International was created "to reflect the true scope of its operations".

Today, Audubon International is the trusted name in environmental stewardship and certification with about 2,000-member courses in the United States and around the world. The organization's approach to sustainability includes several programs from Green Lodging to Sustainable Communities but the ones that impact our industry the most are the Signature Program and the Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf program.

"Certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf is a straightforward way for golf course superintendents to demonstrate their environmental knowledge while benefitting their course and community," Audubon International executive director Christine Kane says. "Participation provides great opportunities to involve everyone at the course: owners, staff and members; in the certification process, thus increasing their knowledge of and connection to their environmental mission."

### GOLF ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATION

[www.golfenvironment.org](http://www.golfenvironment.org)  
The Golf Environment Organization is the premier environmental sustainability verification program in Europe and is making great strides to continue its work throughout the world. With over 1,500 golf courses in 94 countries utilizing their OnCourse programming either as tool to assist and improve

their operations to become more environmentally aware and sustainable or working toward their certification to become a GEO Certified property, it is easy to see how their outreach is helping courses worldwide be better stewards of the land and the environment. GEO is making strides to increase its presence in the United States as there are currently 130 golf courses in the U.S. participating in the OnCourse program, with 11 courses gaining GEO Certified status.

What sets GEO certification apart from the other third-party independent verification programs, in my opinion, besides being a member of the ISEAL Alliance, a global assurance body for sustainability standards, is that GEO requires property managers to look at their property as a whole. GEO Certification requires each manager to look at how his or her property is being sustainable in the broad picture not just on the golf course with water conservation or selecting the proper turf for their environment but over the entire property. Is the produce for the restaurant being purchased local? Are recycling stations available for patrons? What is the carbon footprint impact of products being ordered and delivered to the property? In the big scheme of things, it is often more than just growing some native grass areas, or putting up bird houses on the course, or reducing the amount of water, fertilizer or pesticides used. Superintendents must take into account how their



The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay promotes its third-party environmental certification on course flags.

entire operation is affecting the environment.

#### THE GROUNDWATER FOUNDATION

[www.groundwater.org](http://www.groundwater.org)  
 The Groundwater Foundation began in 1984 by Ms. Susan S. Seacrest due to concerns over elevated nitrate levels in the groundwater in the Platte River Valley near her home in Nebraska. In 1994, the Groundwater Guardian Green Site designation was created to support, recognize and connect communities taking positive, voluntary steps to protect groundwater. Water is one of the main ingredients every golf course superintendent needs to have a healthy and successful course. Protecting and preserving the waterways in, on and around each golf course is extremely important. With 11 of the 18 holes on our golf course directly touching water or wetlands, providing protection and improving our knowledge of how our daily activities impact the watershed is greatly important. Use of vegetative

buffer strips around all waterways, washing our equipment on a self-contained wash pad, and performing routine testing of water entering, used on and exiting our course is vital to our success.

Protecting groundwater, both on and surrounding the golf course, is vital to the environment and partnering with The Groundwater Foundation as a Groundwater Guardian Green Site has allowed The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay to become a better steward of the land.

#### PROMOTING THE PARTNERSHIP

Being environmentally conscious and incorporating programs and practices on your golf course is great, but if the story stops there and there is little to no outreach to tell others what you are doing and why, then some of the benefit is lost. At Harrison Bay we try to promote our partnership with these great organizations in every way possible. From signs and displays in the clubhouse, to including their logos on our letterhead



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and business cards, to including the benefits of certification in presentations we give, we are constantly trying to impress on others the benefits and rewards that come with having our course certified. Several years ago, we placed the logos of these three organizations on our course flags. What better way to get in front of golfers than to place the information on the one thing most every golfer will touch at some point during their round. Now you might think, "How is that getting the word out to the golfer?" You would be surprised at the number of individuals who have inquired about the logos on the



Fostering a positive habitat for wildlife is part of golf's mission.

flags and what they mean in relation to the course. In many cases, it is the subtle approach that gets people's attention the

most and this project has been a great way to promote the partnership.

We all need help sometimes.

A little information or knowledge. A little support or encouragement. A little recognition. Independent third-party certification programs, like the ones highlighted above, give all these to the properties and superintendents who participate in their programs. Being a certified golf course from any of these organizations shows that you are concerned about the environment and your community, you are interested in gaining knowledge of how you can be a better steward of the land, and provides credibility and backing to the environmental programs you and your staff are performing on the course. GCI

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# GOLF ... MORE THAN A GAME



**Zach Wike** is the assistant superintendent at Beaver Creek Golf Club in Beaver Creek, Ohio.

**A**s golf industry professionals, we know that golf is more than just a game. To us, it is a way of life, our profession, our passion and sometimes even like another child. Many in the golf course maintenance profession have been around golf their entire life, me included. I have vivid memories as a 12-year-old spending long summer days playing golf and working at Yankee Run Golf Course, just outside of Youngstown, Ohio. To me, working on a golf course is the only job I have ever held, and one that has created many opportunities and memories. However, those outside of the golf industry often don't see

golf as something more than a hobby or entertainment. As superintendents, we are commonly known as the unseen heroes of the game. As our industry evolves, however, our role in growing the game of golf becomes even larger.

I was fortunate enough to have great mentors in this industry, helping me land jobs at The Honors Course, Pine Valley and Moraine Country Club. Working at these elite clubs prepared me for a fantastic career in golf course maintenance. The skills that I learned at these facilities have been invaluable to my career. It wasn't until I accepted a position at Beaver Creek Golf Club, a municipal facility in Beaver Creek,

Ohio, that I learned the true importance of managing the many stakeholders involved in our industry. Every new endeavor teaches us new things. That is how we all grow personally and professionally, and that is what Beaver Creek has done for me. Shortly after my start in the public sector, I recognized the need to take all stakeholders' interests into account. Suddenly, maintaining golf course conditions only became part of the job. The bigger picture involves other City departments, policy makers, neighbors, citizens, patrons, staff and peers. Golf course maintenance plays a role amongst all of these groups, whether they recognize it or not.

While managing a municipal course, I recognized that many of the citizens do not play golf or use any of the golf course facilities. Some residents only drive by the facility on occasion. It is our job to create positive impressions on the facility, sometimes more than just making the golf course look good from the road. To be viewed as an asset to the community, we worked hard to become a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, a Groundwater Guardian Greensite, a junior golf friendly facility and, most recently, a host to Ohio's first STEM field trip for The First Green.

Our industry has certainly worked hard on growing the game of golf among young people, and The First Green Program is a hole-in-one. In mid-October, Beaver Creek Golf Club hosted 125 fifth-grade students from a Beaver Creek Elementary School for an inaugural First Green event in the area. The event was comprised of six learning stations covering topics such as soil science, area and volume measurement, tools and technology used in the field,

Moraine Country Club superintendent Jason Mahl shows students seeds from various turfgrass varieties found on a golf course.





environmental science, golf course etiquette, and golf instruction. This was a big undertaking, and couldn't have been such a success without the outpouring of support from other local superintendents. Of the 14 volunteers present to help lead the six learning stations, nine were GCSAA members. The dedication of these individuals to help introduce STEM and golf to the next generation is fantastic. The students who participated walked away learning how the subjects that they are taught in the classroom can be used in the real world, but most importantly walked away with smiles on their face and a positive impression on golf.

It is the light you see in the students' eyes that gives you hope for the next generation of golfers and golf industry professionals. Events such as The First Green also do more than introduce golf and STEM to the next generation, it shows the commitment of our industry to be an asset to the community. It helps bridge the gap between golfers and non-golfers. As golf course maintenance professionals, it is our duty to put the spotlight on all of the positives of our industry for the public to see. Opening the eyes of those outside of our circle to the many benefits that golf brings to the community is a rewarding process. The First Green program is an excellent way to do just that, and is certainly a highlight of my career. We as golf course superintendents are all passionate about what we do, and showing our passion to those around us can be one of the most rewarding aspects of our career. **GCI**

**Top:** Zach Wike welcomes 125 fifth-grade students to The First Green field trip at Beavercreek (Ohio) Golf Club. **Middle:** Sycamore Creek Country Club's Brian Burke and Dayton Country Club's Joe Pastor demonstrate soil percolation tests. **Bottom:** Students inspect a tee using a measuring wheel.

# PATIENCE, ENGAGEMENT AND TODAY'S ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT



**Mitch Savage** is the assistant superintendent at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club in Denver, Colo.

**G**iven the dynamic nature of today's assistant superintendent position, I have come to realize, under the guidance of some very successful and knowledgeable individuals, that those of us who currently find ourselves in this role should be mindful and fully embrace our entire journey to the top in this industry. Some of the most amazing lessons learned, relationships built and potential realized lie within that journey. We represent a highly motivated, up-and-coming group of turf professionals who will be tasked with carrying our profession into the future and ensuring its success moving forward. We are excited about this responsibility, therefore it's no wonder we wish to climb the ranks and have the greatest impact as quickly as possible. Our business cards don't need to say superintendent or director of agronomy for us to begin making significant contributions that help our industry as well as our own careers.

Many of us thrive on achieving big goals and we work very hard at doing so, often with heads down at full speed. But it's important to remember to slow down, reflect upon what we are learning and how we are applying those lessons, and steadily absorb as much as possible.

We are part of a generation of assistants who are spending more time in our current roles than many of our predecessors. Instead of viewing this as a negative or a deterrent to continuing in this business, I think we should view this as an opportunity – an op-

portunity to become known as a class of assistants who are extremely educated, trained, polished and capable of taking our profession to new heights. We're a group that's all the readier for the big stage when we do get that chance. Think of the process as a marathon rather than a sprint and don't forget that building positive and meaningful relationships, along with creating a strong personal presence amongst our colleagues is imperative in developing the finer professional skills that will give us the superintendent mindset even before we have the official title.

**“ We're a group that's all the readier for the big stage when we do get that chance.”**

A very effective way to sharpen those skills is to get more involved, as an assistant, in the variety of important areas within our field that stretch beyond the daily happenings on our golf courses. From government affairs and community outreach, to education and committee volunteering, there are endless avenues we can take to grow, contribute and give back. Engagement is a path to some of our biggest opportunities and resources as assistant superintendents. It allows us to connect with other industry professionals and learn

how to become people of influence and inspiration, the building blocks of truly great leadership. Step up and try things that are outside your normal comfort zone because you just might find a new sense of purpose or passion (I certainly have). If we do so while always striving to add value to those around us, rather than placing our own future success as the top priority, amazing things often come to fruition.

While connecting with and learning from successful members within our industry, we should always remember to flip the script and pay it forward by offering guidance to those who might benefit from our insight such as those who are brand new to the industry, interns, recent graduates and younger assistants. The greatest leaders aren't the ones who always win the race – or in this case, make the jump from assistant to superintendent the fastest. The greatest leaders are the ones who take pride in encouraging others to learn, improve and ultimately cross the finish line with them. We should aim to make things better for those who will serve in similar capacities after us. The more we can adopt a mindset that focuses on supporting the industry and our peers, greater things will happen for everybody.

I have discovered that incorporating these philosophies, while getting more involved, can increase personal and career satisfaction immensely. Never stop pushing forward for bigger and better things, but always keep in mind that sometimes we need to slow down to accomplish and learn more, and quite often, we need to help others first to achieve our own goals. If we do that now, some day we will reflect upon the routes we took to become superintendents and think back to how our persistence and professional development efforts earlier in our careers had such a positive impact on everyone around us. Be mindful of the journey. Even though it is good to have an end goal, in the end, it is the journey that really matters. **GCI**

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# What was I THINKING?

By  
Dean Graves

I was having a drink with a young college graduate who wanted to make his mark at his current place of employment as a manager. He asked me, "What does it take to be a good manager, a recognized leader? How can I become a force to be reckoned with in my organization?" I said, "In one word, humility." I then told him my story.

After I graduated from turf school and became an assistant, I thought I knew everything about turf and managing people. It took me only a short period of time to realize my professional training was inadequate and there were many things I didn't know especially when it came to managing and motivating people. I simply thought that my education and experiences would automatically give me more stripes on my arm than my subordinates, therefore they would do *exactly* as *told* and *precisely* the way *I* would complete the task. Wrong!

One morning, after following up with a staff member's delegated undertakings and seeing they were completely

wrong, I lost it. Because I was the "sergeant" and he was my "subordinate," the louder I got the quicker he would respond in a positive way. The follow-up conversation became a high-volume disagreement of pointing fingers with unnecessary and nonproductive expletive words. Nothing useful was accomplished by the conversation and I lost complete credibility with the entire team. Ouch in the biggest way!

That night, I did some deep soul searching and said to myself, "I will never go back to that point in my career again. Never. But how do I grow past this? How do I learn to alter my default reaction to these situations?"

After acknowledging this huge weakness with my management style, I became a self-taught reader of every management, leadership and motivational book I could find. I learned and applied as many techniques and theories to my management character. If/when I made an error, I self-reflect to do better during my next interaction. Gradually, I realized improvement.



**Dean Graves, CGCS**, is the golf course manager at Chevy Chase Club Chevy Chase, Md.

My confidence was restored. Thankfully, after many years, I have become a much-improved leader of people.

My first digested book was "The One Minute Manager" by Kenneth H. Blanchard. It's a must read that is short and filled with dynamic information. It taught me to set common priorities and goals with shared end results. I give this to each of my new assistants as a mandatory read.

#### MANAGEMENT TEAM

I am fortunate to work with three awesome assistants. They work long hours and extremely

hard. The assistants and I use Mondays to make a plan for the upcoming week and priority plans for multiple weeks. We agree as a team what needs to be completed as high and secondary priorities. In addition to this, every evening the assistants create a priority list for the next day's accomplishments, including what every staff member will be doing for all the day's work goals. This is reviewed again in the morning by the management team prior to the start of the day, adding any other needs. This habitual procedure gives buy-in by sharing a common vision and

expressing respective ideas with the entire management team.

#### STAFF PARTNERS

Our staff is comprised of many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, making management especially unique. The staff represents more than eight distinctly different backgrounds. If I would summarize our successful management philosophy with a single word, it would be appreciation.

Not all staff members are motivated by using the same means. It is critically important to know each individual person to figure out what they value

and what is important to them. I have done my best to get to know each person and know them as a person, not a laborer. I have come to realize this is a true motivational technique.

I know what their children are doing, what is going on with their lives, what they do after work and what is on their respective minds each day. I care about each person and what is important to them. Most of the staff is here to earn money to support their families and not to make a career of managing a golf course. They could be anywhere and make the same amount of money to satisfy

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their needs. Why do they come back when it is 100 degrees or 30 degrees and snowing? I like to think because I care about them as a person.

I also believe the staff needs and wants to know their boundaries. If something goes awry with a task, it is our obligation as managers to correct the concern. It is my true feeling that our best motivator while maximizing behavior is immediate feedback. This goes for both positive and not so positive outcomes. I try to say great job when appropriate and this is where you need to improve as needed without waiting.

If the individual is praised sincerely when a job is completed as requested, then they feel positive and it reinforces what is good and what the standard of task is. On the other hand, if the quality is below your standards, then a corrective conversation is needed. We need to have a balance between these two dialogues. A good staff member will appreciate knowing exactly how they stand with the team.

Another vital management item is having the staff partner take ownership of the assignment. Make them feel what they are doing is important to the entire presentation of the

golf course. It is hard to have a new staff member get excited about raking bunkers. But if it is explained to them this detail is very much noticed with the golfers and the consistency of each bunker is essential to the consistent play of the course, better results usually occur.

Other mechanisms used:

- Employee of the month special parking space
- Employee of the month monetary bonus
- Employee of the month, best attendance, most improved, best innovative idea awards
- A staff Olympics where the staff breaks out into teams

and we compete with events like backing up a cart through an obstacle course or tug of war with a Carry-All cart

I am better and still improving but always learning and never expect to be perfect. My improvement has come through hard struggles, numerous mistakes, and identifying and improving upon a weakness. My formal education did a good job teaching me how bentgrass would react on the 10<sup>th</sup> day when it was 100 degrees and 85 percent humidity. I was not taught how a staff member would react while working in the same environment. GCI

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# SOAP BOX DERBY!



**Matthew Wharton, CGCS, MG**, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, N.C.

**G**rowing up in rural southwestern Virginia, I never had the opportunity to build a soap box derby car. I remember seeing photographs or images on television of youthful midwestern lads attempting to maximize their wind resistance and reach the finish line first and thinking that would be fun. I was a Cub Scout and Webelo, and enjoyed the Pinewood Derby. I believe my cars might still be somewhere at my mother's house. It was fun, but it wasn't quite the same. As I got older, I learned the term soap box connotated a different meeting, one where folks publicly aired their opinions, grievances or other beliefs. I'm not one who usually hops upon an old tree stump to address the group, but I thought just this once I would make an exception.

Ever since the days when Old Tom Morris began to improve the conditions of the links on the Old Course at St. Andrews, golf course superintendents have been required to contend with the results of poor course etiquette exhibited by golfers. Whether it's unrepaired ball marks, footprints in bunkers, or unreplaced or overfilled divots, it seems we're always trying to better educate our end users to improve course conditions, and make our lives a little easier. I abhor stakes and ropes, yet find them a necessary

evil at times to prevent folks from damaging the course. More recently, we have moved on to other transgressions such as applying aerosol-based insect repellent or sunscreen to one's lower extremities when standing on turf and the latest craze – driving range divot patterns. Twitter is home to multiple posts every day from turf professionals expressing their disapproval of the actions of either their members or paying customers. Even I have engaged in attempting to use Twitter to alter the behavior of my members, but there is one other golf course transgression that I believe is prevalent in our industry that really gets under my skin ... D!@# Measuring!

In the movie "Taken," Liam Neeson's character Brian Mills stops to speak with his ex-wife Lenore shortly after their daughter Kim is abducted in France. Lenore is remarried to Stuart and as Brian

questions Stuart to determine if anyone overseas would want to bring harm to him and his family, Stuart comments, "I have resources of my own." To which Brian quickly states, "Now is not the time for d!@# measuring Stuart!"

I think we all know how the remainder of the film goes, and at this point I've lost half of you and the other half is thinking, "How



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did he get from unrepaired ball marks to penis size comparisons?" Despite being perturbed by poor golf course etiquette, what really tees me off (pun intended) is the d!@# measuring I see at local chapter meetings. Could someone please explain why golf course superintendents think it's a great idea to use last year's Tough Day setup at this week's chapter association event? Last time I checked golf course superintendents do not play golf for a living, although some of us may possess a GHIN number and single-digit index. There are also quite a few in the group who struggle from the white tees. Golf is supposed to be fun. And when most chapters are struggling with attendance numbers, did you ever stop to think folks aren't having fun spending five-plus hours on the double bogey train and four-putt carousel.

Don't get me wrong, I understand your peers are coming to see your course and you want it to look its very best. In other words, you want to "show off." There's nothing wrong with having pride in your course and nothing wrong with a double cut and roll before the noon shotgun, but do we really need to see all 18 of your most difficult, over-the-top hole locations in one round to know your course is challenging? Whether we're talking about the crest of ridges and knobs, the toes of steep slopes or the edge of a false-

**“ Could someone please explain why golf course superintendents think it's a great idea to use last year's Tough Day setup at this week's chapter association event? ”**

front, it's a pace-of-play nightmare. Truth be told, the only thing you've showed off to me is a disregard for your fellow greenkeepers and industry folks who are busy and struggle to make the time and effort to get away on occasion. Most of us don't take enough time to get out and experience each other's courses frequently enough if the results of the recent Can Am Cup Matches are any indicator. Looks like our brothers to the north have a better work/life balance than those of us in the states.

To make matters worse, it seems if someone is brave enough to comment to the host about how great the course was but noted the difficulty of the pins the host usually responds

with, "I let my assistant or intern do setup today." Insert facepalm emoji here! Thanks pal, I guess it never occurred to you this might be a great opportunity to instruct and educate your young staffers on course setup and pace-of-play management. Whatever happened to knowing your target audience?

At my club, we host several Guest Day events throughout the year. These are one-day tournaments and we strive to showcase the course at its best on behalf of our members. I permit my staff to select hole locations for these events because it's a great learning experience, but I always remind them this isn't Tough Day. It's OK to select one, maybe two holes at most that will "give them something to talk about in the bar after their round," but what we're striving for is a fun day on the course for our members and their guests.

So maybe next time you get selected to host your peers you might scoot up a couple of tees and place a few holes in some collection areas or at least away from the hazards. Besides, we're all just excited to get away from our place for half the day and enjoy the camaraderie and networking the golf provides, as well as the education. OK, we're here for the beer, but my point is everyone just wants to relax and have fun, not spend all day watching the foursome ahead three-putt from 15 feet.

Thanks for listening! GCI

**#GCITWEETUP18: SOCIAL MEDIA INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION**



The industry's biggest social media celebration returns for a seventh year as GCI and Aquatrols will present the Super Social Media Awards at 2018 Golf Industry Show in San Antonio.

Nominations for the Super Social Media Awards are open until Thursday, Jan. 4,

2018. Winners of the awardswill be honored during the annual TweetUp at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7 at Aquatrols Booth #5097. Industry professionals will be honored in five categories: Best Overall Use of Social Media, Best Twitter Feed, Best Blog, Best Use of Video and John Ka-

minski Award for Leadership in Social Media. Winners will be announced in January and recipients will receive their awards at #GCITweetUp18.

Judging will be conducted by the GCI editorial staff and a panel of industry experts and educators. Readers are encouraged to nominate others

or nominate themselves. Multiple nominations in the same or different categories are acceptable. Please include the category and appropriate links to senior editor Guy Cipriano at [gcipriano@gie.net](mailto:gcipriano@gie.net) or @GCI MagazineGuy. Email, tweet or call Cipriano at 216-393-0230 with questions.

# TARTAN TALKS

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# THE PERSONALITY OF LABOR

SENS

Asking targeted questions and matching a few letters to the results might be the key to assembling an effective staff.

It's not uncommon to pick up any trade magazine today and see multiple articles on labor. It doesn't matter what business it is, finding committed staff seems to be getting harder. That trend doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon. However, there are good people out there and just as the 2007-08 economic collapse taught us to be better financial managers, this can make us better leaders of our teams. We hire carefully to be sure the staff we hire fit the culture of our workplace as well as the culture of the club. I think everyone does this whether it's a conscious decision or not. When you interview to fill

a position on your staff, I think it's safe to assume we are always thinking if this person will "fit in" and get along with those already on the team.

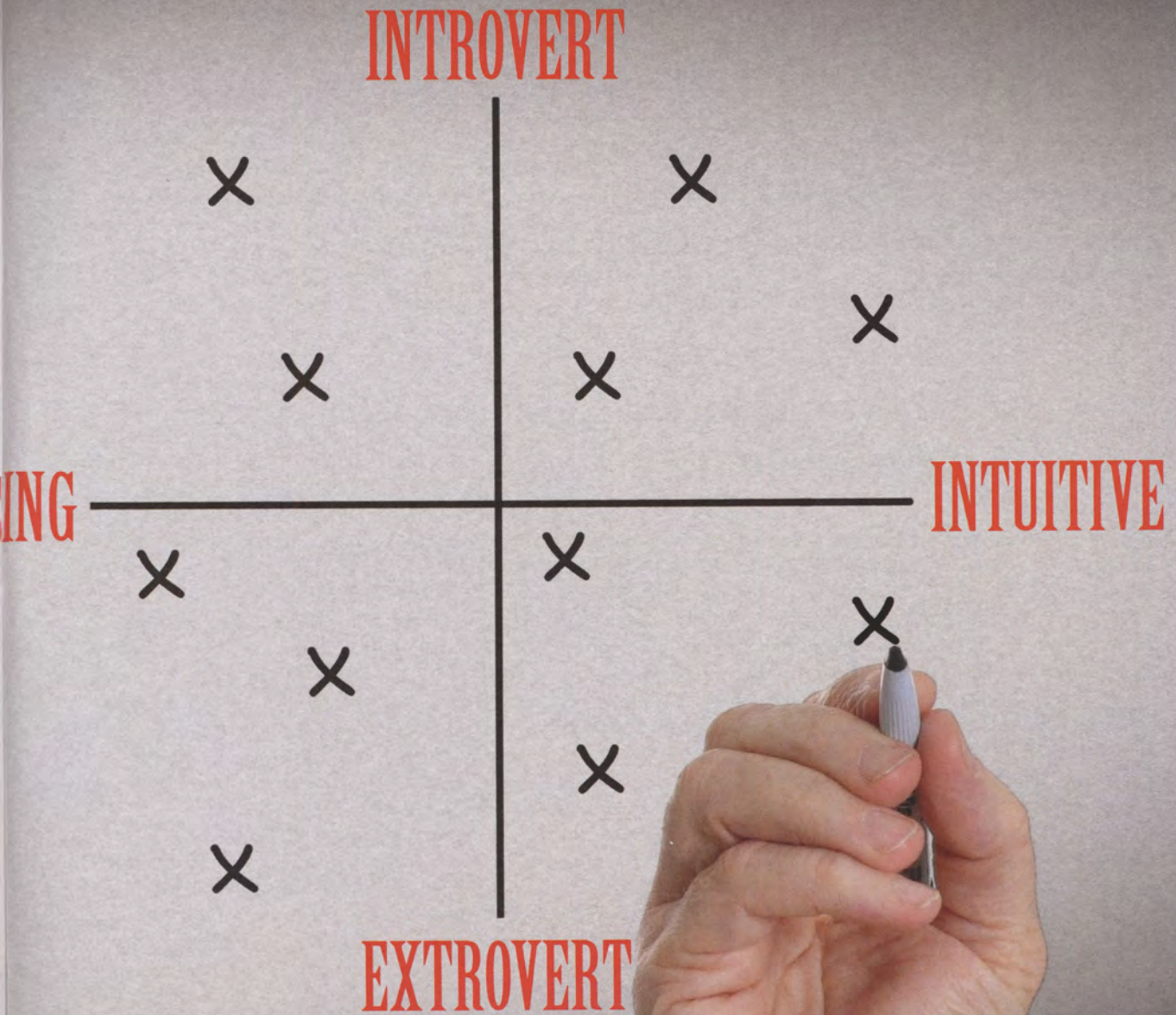
Personality dynamics took on a new meaning to me, when in 2007, I was involved in Leadership Highlands, one of many Leadership programs in cities across the U.S. We started the one-year program by accessing our personality type using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test. By finding out our "type," we were able to discuss



**Brian Stiehler, CGCS, MG**, is the superintendent at Highlands Country Club in Highlands, N.C.

with each other how we prefer to interact, take in information and organize our lives compared to those around us. The idea of this fascinated me. When the leadership program was over, I went to Atlanta to the American Management Association. I took an intensive week-long class to become a Myers-

Briggs certified practitioner. It's something that has become very useful in my daily job. If you are open to this idea, one can quickly learn what other people need in the way of training, the



jobs that they would naturally be successful at as well as what buttons you can press to send them over the edge (not recommending this). It's easy to draw conclusions on an employee's work ethic and value by comparing them to the way we would do things. After all, if you are a successful superintendent, you must have it figured out. But, what if it is more complicated?

#### THE TEST

The MBTI is an introspective self-report questionnaire with the purpose of indicating differing psychological preferences in how people perceive the world around them and make decisions.

It is based on the conceptual theory proposed by Carl Jung, who had speculated that there are four principal psychological functions by which humans experience the world — sensation, intuition, feeling and thinking — and that one of these four functions is dominant for a person most of the time. The MBTI was constructed for normal populations and emphasizes the value of naturally occurring differences. The underlying assumption of the MBTI is that we all have specific preferences in the way we construe our experiences, and these preferences underlie our interests, needs, values and motivation. Let me be clear, this should never be used solely in making hiring decisions. It's a tool to provide valuable insight. Is it perfect? Of course not. However, I will point out some fascinating statistics regarding

**“As a leader, good information usually comes only after the right questions are asked to an introvert. They usually aren't going to speak up immediately.”**

certain types that will prove the insightfulness of the MBTI.

The exam can only be administered by a certified practitioner (once certified, exams can be purchased by said person) and not available online. I would caution anyone about interpreting the results without the full understanding of the theory. The 93-question survey asks many repetitive and redundant questions to see how a person would answer them in slightly different situations and settings. There are four areas of our type that are measured.

The first series of questions will determine if you are an introvert or extrovert (I or E). This is the most obvious. This tells us about our attitudes or orientations of our energy. Extroverts direct their energy toward others while introverts tend to keep their ideas to themselves and focus energy toward their inner world. Extroverts can be viewed as the life of the party, but can also be viewed as obnoxious by

an introvert. An extrovert might think something is wrong with an introvert. Why won't this person share information? As a leader, good information usually comes only after the right questions are asked to an introvert. They usually aren't going to speak up immediately.

Another series of questions determine your sensing-intuition tendencies — how do you take in information in order to make decisions (S or N). Sensing people are science-based people focused on information that they know is true based on their senses. Intuitive

people focus on perceived patterns and interrelationships.

The third area focuses on the process of how we make decisions (T or P). Thinking people tend to base decisions on logical analysis and remain detached and objective. It's a fact that thinkers are better able to handle the hiring/firing process. A “feeling person” bases conclusions on personal and social values, always trying to understand viewpoints and achieve harmony in an organization. A feeler is going to worry how a terminated employee will be impacted and how their family will react and survive. It doesn't mean a feeler can't fire someone, but it will be far more stressful on them than their counterpart (a thinker).

The final area is how we organize our lives (J or P). Judging people (does not mean judgmental) are quick to make decisions in order to achieve finalization. They are very organized and structured in day-

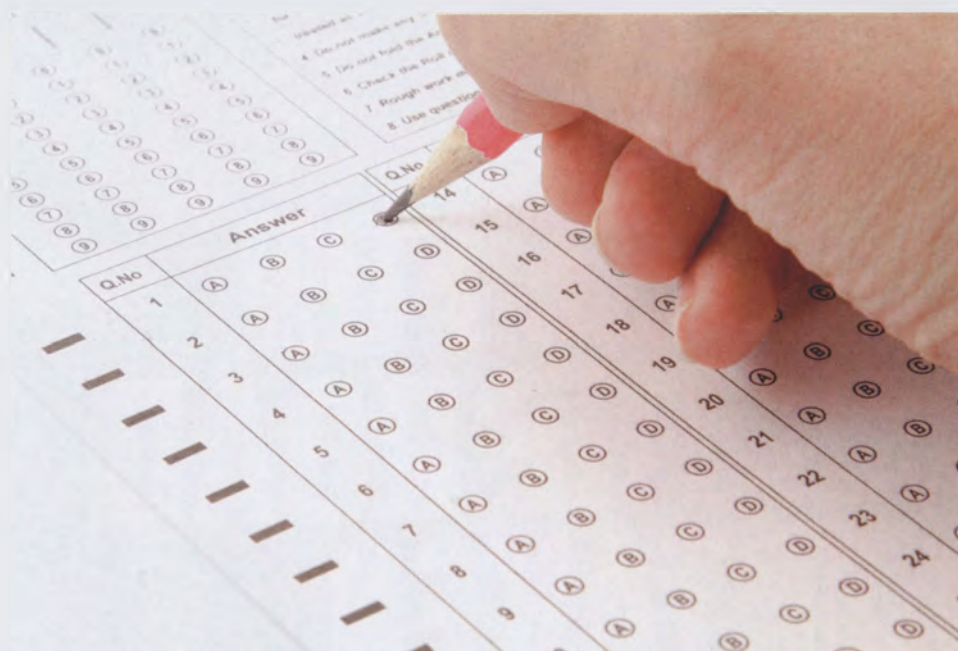
to-day life. A “perceiver” is someone who likes loose ends because something better may arise and making a decision too early will block them in. When given an assignment, a judger methodically works through pre-planned steps, while a perceiver often works to the last minute. A perceiver, when taking a vacation, won't make plans while a judger will have a strict itinerary.

When the assessment is complete, you will be assigned one of 16 different personality types that are identified by four letters. Personally, for example, I am an ESTJ — an extroverted, sensing, thinking, judger. What does all this mean? Enough research has been done to prove there are a lot of traits that suit people for specific jobs. For example, 70 percent of CEOs fall into the ESTJ type, 90 percent of dentists fall into the ISTJ category. On a much sadder note, ISTJ's (not just dentists) have the highest suicide rate. It's scary — and interesting — how this can be tracked.

#### USING IT ON THE COURSE

Think about your job and what makes you good at what you do. Are there parts of your personality that you wish were a little different? Your type doesn't prevent you from anything. What it tells us is that to be opposite of our inherent type will cause some level of stress. Some of the best salespeople in any business seem to be extroverted. However, they may actually be introverted but know what it takes to build relationships. While they can be extroverted in short spurts, doing this for long periods of time causes stress and could ultimately end





Constructed for normal population, the MBTI emphasizes the value of naturally occurring differences. The assumption is we all have specific preferences in the way we construe our experiences, and these preferences underlie our interests, needs, values and motivation.

in some form of job dissatisfaction. Or psychologically there is a recovery period after spending a long amount of time around people where the introvert needs to be alone. In the case of a thinker vs. feeler, counselors and teachers tend to be more feeling. A thinker can often come across as insensitive to feelers. Think of these following examples of golf course management and how practical this can be:

**1.** Who would you put on a rough mower for hours at a time? An introvert or extrovert? Is there potential for the extrovert to rush through the job? Does it make this person a bad employee or are they more suited for group-oriented tasks? On the flipside, what happens when an introvert is stuck on a four-man bunker

crew? Will that person enjoy the job?

**2.** You're in the process of hiring an assistant. You tend to be the perceiving type, but you know your weakness might be getting projects done on time. Do you hire someone like you or do you look for someone more structured to complement you? If you hire someone more structured, are you giving them adequate information to plan? Want to push the buttons of someone like this – just withhold information from them!

**3.** How do you train staff? A sensing person likes to be physically shown how to do something. Remember, they use their senses. An intuitive person is into bigger-picture ideas and might have their own

thoughts or want to figure it out on their own. Training an intuitive person in a hands-on manner comes across as condescending or talking to them like a child. But at the same time, can you afford to give that person the freedom? Maybe an intuitive person wouldn't like the monotonous job of detailed turf maintenance? Can you take an intuitive person and create a job with the flexibility to use their creativity?

**4.** I would venture to guess that most of us as superintendents are either ESTJs or ISTJs, with the majority being ISTJs. An extrovert doesn't typically do well in a behind-the-scenes operation. How many introverts do you think enjoy standing in the golf shop greeting members on a Saturday morning? Does that mean

they don't do it? Of course not. But do they enjoy it? Or do they tolerate it for short periods?

**5.** It's raining outside. A sensing/ thinker superintendent responds, "The club bought you all rain suits, and you're paid hourly, so put them on and let's go back out and keep working." An intuitive feeler superintendent says, "Let's stay inside until the rain passes because I'm afraid crew morale will be impacted if I make the staff work in the rain." Neither is right or wrong. However, one can come across as harsh and the other one can come across as soft. The first is very "matter of fact," while the latter is a considerate approach to the feelings of the group for the long-term benefit of the club.

**WORK AT IT**

This can be summarized by saying that we all have different tendencies when it comes to life. It isn't cut and dry, but we do tend to fall to one side or the other in these areas. To be successful, we need to either place ourselves in a position that suits our type or tolerate aspects of a job that we may not enjoy but feel the positives outweigh those stresses. While there are books and books written on the topic, I've summarized it in only 1,900 words.

Next time you hire someone or have a staffing challenge, think about these things. Did you adequately communicate with that person? Did you put them in a position for them to be successful? Or did you just assume they would fall in line with the way you would do things? **GCI**

# THE CASE FOR TAKING THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

**Architect Nathan**

**Crace reveals why he  
built a golf course in  
his backyard as a child  
— and why he chose  
creativity over comfort  
as an adult.**

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I  
 took the one less traveled by, and that has  
 made all the difference.”*

**C**hances are, at some point in your life, you either read the poem by Robert Frost that contains these lines or you have heard some version of it. For me, these lines sum up how I came to be where I am today in my career as a golf course architect.

No matter that I did not earn a degree in landscape architecture. No matter that I did not get my start in my career working for an established golf course architect. No matter that I grew up in a small Indiana town where there was – and still is – no golf course. And no matter that no one in my family even played golf. The odds seemed to be against me from start. So how did a lifetime of choosing the other path pay off? Pretty good, so far...

When I was about nine or 10 years old, one Sunday afternoon, I was dialing through channels amongst the four options available to me in those days: CBS, NBC, ABC and the PBS affiliate in Louisville, Ky. Through dumb luck, I happened upon the Bing Crosby Pro-Am from Pebble Beach. This was when there were only a couple of hours on Saturday and Sunday when you could watch golf. I was immediately struck by the beauty of Pebble Beach – hard against the Pacific Ocean with waves crashing below the rocks dotted with sea lions and the contrast of beautiful green grass and sand bunkers. I didn't really care much about the guys in goofy Sansabelt pants swinging metal sticks and smacking a tiny white ball, but I found the television guide page from the local paper and – with a bit of light detective work – deciphered that this was a professional golf tournament in California. To a young boy in Indiana who didn't know what golf was, it might as well have been halfway around the world.

I made a mental note to check back the following week and watch again. To my surprise, it was a different golf course! Completely different! The very reason that I did not care for baseball, where every ballpark seemed to be a carbon copy of the others with the exception of Fenway Park, was the same reason I was drawn to golf. Each course was different from the others. What delicious madness was this?

I watched and studied the courses because I didn't understand the game. Then I noticed a name that seemed to be getting a lot of attention each week. A blonde-haired guy who really took a whack at that little ball. At first, I thought his name was Nichols because there was a famous golfer across the river in Louisville named Bobby Nichols that a neighbor told me about upon learning of my newfound interest from my parents. Then I realized it was not Jack Nichols. It was Jack Nicklaus. I was an instant fan, even though I had not yet hit a shot or even gripped a club.

When another neighbor heard that I had been bitten by the golf bug, he brought my father a paper grocery sack of old golf balls he had buried away in his garage years ago when he “retired” from the game. It was a good start, but it's hard to hit a ball like Jack Nicklaus when you have no implement with which to hit it.

I began to take my mother up on her offers to tag along to weekend yard sales in a quest to find a golf club (little did I know there were entire bags of them). At one stop, I came across an old Wilson 7 iron with a grip as slick as a Washington politician's alibi (a little medium grit sandpaper fixed that). I promised to keep my room clean for eternity if I could have it and she obliged. Then, as if by Divine providence, at another yard sale, I found a well-used copy of “Golf My Way” by Jack Nicklaus. There was a sketch of him on the cover. It had to be fate. After some intense negotiations in which my duties for bringing in the garbage cans from the street would be supplemented with loading the dishwasher, my mother agreed to spring the 50 cents for the book. I still have it in my library to this day and Jack was kind enough to autograph it for me when I joined the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

#### HOME GOLF CONSTRUCTION

So, there I was. I had a 7 iron, a book of how to play and a sack of golf balls. Now all I needed was a golf course. I chose the road that most 10-year-old boys without a course in their town would not choose:



**Nathan Crace, ASGCA**, is the principal of Watermark Golf/Nathan Crace Golf Design.

I built a three-hole course on my parents' land. It actually wasn't that crazy. My father was a general contractor and I enlisted the help of my friends for free labor. I studied each golf course on TV and the "course a day" desk calendar I received as a gift. Soon, I was mowing tees, fairways and greens. Eventually, I borrowed an unused push reel mower to try and get the greens cut as low as possible (though still not puttable) and my father agreed to bring us a truckload of sand if we dug out the bunkers and promised to keep them free of weeds and cat deposits.

Before long, we had our own golf course and I spent hours every day after school and every weekend reading Jack's book, copying his swing from TV, and trying to ingrain it in intense practice sessions on my personal golf course. Before long, I was getting the hang of it and by the time my freshman year in high school came around, I was good enough to play four years of varsity golf. I also knew by my senior year what I wanted to do for a living: I wanted to be a golf course architect.

Once again, I chose to take the road less traveled. I had no earthly idea how to get from Charlestown, Ind., to the office of any golf course architect. There was no Internet and long-distance calls were for talking to my grandparents in Tennessee. I had resigned myself to either attend the University of Kentucky – my father's favorite – for a business degree or head off to Ball State with my friends for a business degree.

I was not crazy about a general business degree because it felt boring and vague. I've always told my children to

choose a career doing what you like, that you are good at and that you can make good money doing it. I could make money in business, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I could have easily earned a degree and likely gone to work for my dad and eventually taken over for him when he retired, but that would not have been my company. No, I wanted to design golf courses and I wanted to do it on my own – I just didn't know how to go about doing that.

Then my mother received a pamphlet in the mail about the PGA's Professional Golf Management program at New Mexico State. She decided immediately that Las Cruces was entirely too far for her youngest child to go away to college and started making some phone calls to find out that there were two other PGM programs at that time – the original one at Ferris State in northern Michigan, where the golf season shuts down in early November and the second oldest one at Mississippi State University.

Starkville seemed a good compromise for a campus visit. Closer than New Mexico, warmer than Michigan, and as an added bonus, it was an SEC school with a large student body and plenty of great football teams to see each fall. That was it! My plan was simple: I would get a degree, become a club pro and get a job at a course about to renovate or a new course under construction, meet the architect, and – once he knew I wanted to design courses – I would be hired on the spot. It seemed simple to my 17-year-old brain. It didn't go that way.

I fell in love with the school and one of the co-eds (we will

have been married for 23 years this December) and spent four years going to class, playing golf, playing intramural basketball, and going to cooperative internships at some great golf courses where I learned how the operation is impacted by the design and how the maintenance is intertwined with the design. To this day, I credit my time as an assistant on those co-ops with giving me a better understanding of how design and maintenance are co-dependent. It's one thing that differentiates me from other golf course architects and is one reason many of my leads are initiated by calls from superintendents more so than club professionals.

#### THE COMFORTABLE OR CREATIVE ROAD?

After graduation, I was burned out on the golf business and went to work for a marketing company in Jackson, Miss. The money was good, and I had weekends off. I hated it. My wife knew I hated it. And when I had an opportunity to go to work for an upstart new company founded by a golf course superintendent where I could help him design golf courses and use my experience from co-ops to help with the management side of that company, she and I decided to take that road instead of the comfortable one.

After eight years there and some great projects, it was time to take another road. This one was complicated by the fact that we had a four-year-old daughter and a newborn son. It was scary, but I'm glad we did it. That was when we founded Watermark Golf. We've been fortunate through the "Great Recession" to stay busy. At a time when

some other firms were laying people off or closing up shop, our hands-on boutique approach to projects has enabled me to take on a number of renovation projects and keep the company going. Now things are picking back up as the economy turns around, and 2018 and '19 are looking promising.

A few years ago, I realized one of my professional goals that I set when I was a teenager involved becoming a member of the ASGCA. I have to thank Bob Cupp posthumously for being my lead sponsor and past presidents John LaFoy and Steve Smyers for sponsoring my membership application, as well as the other members who took time to review my work. To quote another great American poet, "what a long strange trip it's been," but it feels like it's only just begun. And at almost every step along the way, I can look back and see options I had that would have led to other roads and changed the outcome of my life.

And so, much like Robert Frost, a number of times I stood at the proverbial fork in the road and looked at two roads: one well-defined, well-travelled and safe while the other was not so well-marked, unclear and scary for a young couple with small children. However, with the support of my wife and kids and a faith in doing what I believed in my heart was right for us, here we are. I know there will undoubtedly be more roads from which to choose in the future and if experience is any teacher at all, rest assured that I will continue to take the one not taken – because it has made all the difference. I encourage you to consider doing the same. **GC**

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# US AND THEM



**Adam Ikamas**, CGCS, is the executive director of the Michigan GCSA.

**F**irst off, I want to thank GCI for offering this opportunity to speak about something near and dear to my heart.

This is a topic and title I have written about before and I am sure will write about again. It is about the value, both real and perceived, in professional associations, in our case specifically the GCSAA and the 98 affiliated chapters. This is a hot topic on both sides and passion can run high in both camps. As you can imagine, I am pretty well dug in on one side, but I was not always that way.

I knew that being part of the group that represents our industry was important, so important that I joined GCSAA at 18 years old as a crew member at the golf course I worked on at the time. But that was about it for many years. As a student at Michigan State, I kept the membership. As an assistant, the course I worked for paid the Class C dues. The same was true when I became a superintendent in 2004. I would occasionally read an article or two from the magazine and attend GIS when the course could afford it, but really that was my only interaction with the GCSAA. Some of you reading this are avid GCSAA members who get involved, some of you are not members, and some are probably even avid detractors of the GCSAA and/or your local chapter. You may say the GCSAA or local membership dues are not worth it, it is a waste of money and what do they do for me anyway? Now this is not the first time I have

**“ The GCSAA and your local chapter are not a direct service in the traditional sense. These groups are an opportunity and can be as large of an opportunity as you can make of them.”**

heard this, and personally there was a time when perhaps I would have not disagreed with it. If you look at GCSAA or your local chapter as a service, then it appears to be a terrible value: \$375 for a GCSAA membership and another \$100-plus for the local dues, and all you get are a few magazines you don't usually have time to read.

However, if that is your mindset, I'm not sure you understand how this all works. The GCSAA and your local chapter are not a direct service in the traditional sense. These groups are an opportunity and can be as large of an opportunity as you can make of them. If you sit back and wait for these groups to do things for you, it will not work. It is not supposed to work that way. It is like buying a new sprayer, parking it in the barn and wondering why you have disease ridden turf. Anything you need or could want is at your fingertips, but you must use your own power to move it.

When I first started this job, I struggled with trying to come up with the “elevator pitch” to explain why the

MiGCSA is important for members. I started listing all the things we do behind the scenes like foster relationships with the state and local governments, provide networking and educational opportunities, produce an industry leading magazine and a massive communication network, and so on down the line into the minutia of the daily operations. But as I struggled with this, I was turned on to a “Ted Talk” by Simon Sinek on the idea that people do not believe in what you do, they believe in why you do it. This res-

onated with me and has changes my elevator speech completely.

Your local chapter and GCSAA is not about doing things for you, even though they both do a lot. They are about giving you the opportunity to be part of us, not them, just us. We are all people in the golf industry, association members or not. It is what we do. Why do we do it? For the giant paychecks, or the glory and appreciation? It is because we are passionate about our profession. As a group of people who are passionate about our profession, we are unstoppable. When we all believe in why we do it together, we are unstoppable. When we utilize the opportunities by getting involved to whatever level you would like, we are unstoppable. When the GCSAA does well, we all do well. When the local chapter does well, we all do well. It is not they do well. We are they. So, the next time you wonder about paying your dues to either group please think of it not as a service like your cable bill, but as an investment in all of us which absolutely includes YOU. GCI

# GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

GCI supports the initiatives that matter to you because they matter to us too! We'll continue to raise money and awareness for Wee One Foundation and other non-profits that make a difference in the lives of turfheads. We champion causes that matter.

# GIVING BACK



GCI is THE independent voice for superintendents in print, on the web and on social media.



**Travels**  
with  
**Terry**

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.



**Terry Buchen**, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 41-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or [terrybuchen@earthlink.net](mailto:terrybuchen@earthlink.net).

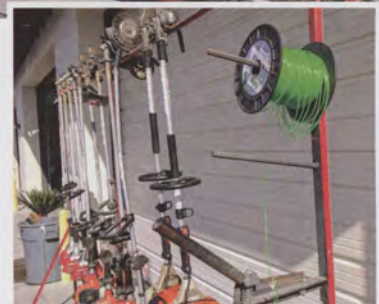
## PINE NEEDLE RAKE

The Golf Club at Black Rock in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, has its fair share of pine trees and removing the pine needles has become much easier with the modification to their Toro 3020 Sand Pro rake mechanism. Lonnie Aller, superintendent, and Phil Taylor, equipment manager, learned of this great idea from Darak Bigler, equipment manager, at the Circling Raven Golf Club in Worley, Idaho. The OEM rake was removed and a 2-inch by 3-inch box tubing main frame was welded together and then welded to a ¼-inch thick steel plate that is bolted to the hydraulic lift mechanism. Down pressure is used as-needed when raking the pine needles from underneath pine trees and to put them into piles for removal. Fifteen pieces of 1-inch square tubing approximately 6 inches long is welded to the box tubing main frame. Each metal leaf rake wooden handle slides all the way through the 1-inch square tubing that are then bolted in place. It took about eight labor hours, \$100 for the metal parts and red paint, and \$12 each for the 15 leaf rakes.



## MOBILE EQUIPMENT STAND

Measuring 12 feet long, 3 feet wide and 7 feet high, this equipment stand was welded together using a combination of 1-inch square (⅜ inch) and 1-inch round (⅜ inch) tubing (\$80). The floor is comprised of seven 3-foot long 1 ¼-inch by ⅝-inch thick angle iron pieces (\$34) welded together that support two 16-gauge pieces of sheet metal pieces (\$60) measuring 3 feet by 6 feet each to collect any fuel or oil that might leak from the machines. Six lockable caster wheels (\$30) are used for easy mobility and maneuverability. Approximately 15 string line trimmers, edgers, engine-powered hedge trimmers and stick chainsaws are easily stored and accessible along with two pieces of rebar for storing spools of string line and a cutter immediately below to cut plastic lines the proper length. It took about a day to build and the total cost was about \$204 for parts and materials. John Nachreiner, director of agronomy; Tyler Gullickson, assistant superintendent; Doug Price, equipment manager; and Vicente Sandoval, head mechanic, make up the very creative team at the Shady Canyon Golf Club in Irvine, Calif.





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# THE SPIRIT OF ST. ANDREWS



**Old Tom Morris** is the patriarch of golf course maintenance. While in the middle of an outstanding playing career, he served as the greenkeeper for the Royal and Ancient Golf Club.

**G**reetings ye keepers of the green!  
I can nae begin to tell ye how gob-smacked I am to see what's happening in in the world of gawf today.

Yes, I've been dead nigh onto a hundred years now but I've been observing ... I've been keenly observing ... and I have a few choice things to say to those who are practicing the art and science of greenkeeping today.

First, it's bloody astonishing to see what your courses look like today. Even here at St. Andrews where I'm buried, they've managed to harness Mother Nature herself with irrigation systems, drainage and some crazy concoctions that stop the turf from getting all sick and patchy.

And the mowers! I was the first to introduce push mowers on a golf course back in the day. They were ugly, heavy nasty things. Now they just whiz along and cut perfectly. Let me tell ye it's a helluva bit better than sheep, sonny boy.

I'm nae sure what to think about all the different styles of courses these days. My mind is right boggled by Augusta National. It's like art! Everything is perfect. It's not what we thought gawf was meant to be played on back 150 years ago. But who I am to judge?

I am fond of what I've been seeing the past few decades with courses getting grittier, more primitive and

“Back when I roamed the turf, greenkeepers didn't share their secret tricks and such. We just put down more saund and the stinky stuff from cows.”

a little less artistic. When the good people at Pinehurst decided to go back to my countryman Mr. Donald Ross's original vision, that started something important. I like what Mr. Crenshaw, Mr. Coore, Mr. Doak and that other Scot gentleman Mr. David McLay Kidd – who's father was a greenkeeper too – are doing. It's auld school!

Ye also have rediscovered something I was a big believer in a century ago: saund (or sand, and you call it). My assistant Mr. Honeyman probably was mighty weary of me saying, “Saund Honeyman! Saund and mair saund!” The turf loves saund!

But ye also seem to have lost your minds when it comes to bunkers! Why in the name of Queen Mary would ye make them so perfect??? As your Mr. Timothy Moraghan tells yer spoiled whiny players, “They're hazards ... don't hit it there.” Exactly! Quit molly-coddling them and tell them this: Play the course as ye find it, laddie.

I must say I'm a wee tetch jealous of how well ye all get along these days. Back when I roamed the turf, greenkeepers didn't share their secret

tricks and such. We just put down more saund and the stinky stuff from cows. Now, ye can find answers to any questions anytime and ye all get along like great mates. I'm not sure why you spend so much time Tweeting like birdies, but it seems to help you keep the turf better so keep duin it.

So, good on ye for all you've done for greenkeeping. It's bonnie to have helped get you started. But, as I lie mouldering neath the soil, I have had a few thoughts that ye may find some wisdom in.

There is giant power in habit. I swam every morning in the Firth of Fife no matter the weather or my temperament. It was my habit and it was one reason I lived so long and left a legacy for others. If I tried to teach my apprentices and assistants one thing, it was to build good habits and practice them every day.

Look around and enjoy the place and time you're in. Remember the past is past and the future is unknowable. Tis a good life that's spent in the present.

Innovation for the sake of innovation isn't always an answer. The auld ways of building healthy soils and ensuring the turf gets fed proper are still good ways.

Ye seem to think I was only a greenkeeper and a clubmaker and a golf professional. People who knew me back in the day remember me for something else: being kind. I dinnae have an unkind word to say about others because I believed in the Golden Rule. Be kind to the people ye meet and ye shall be happy.

Treasure your family, particularly your wee ones. Greenkeeping is hard work but ye should leave it behind at the barn when ye go home at night.

Lastly, remember that gawf was meant to be a pastime. We invented the game to stay busy and active and have a bit of a lark while herding the bloody sheep. It's not worth making yourself bonkers about. It's supposed to be fun. Don't eer forget that's the real Spirit of St. Andrews. **GCI**

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