“Pinehurst No. 8 is the first course ever established with Penn G-2. The greens continue to be excellent.”

Jeff Hill, CGCS, Superintendent
Pinehurst No. 8

“Our members and guests enjoy superior conditions on a daily basis.”

Paul Jett, CGCS, Superintendent
Pinehurst No. 2

“Penn G-2 allows us to have excellent putting green quality throughout the season.”

Kyle Brown, Superintendent
Pinehurst No. 1 and Pinehurst No. 4

“Penn G-2 is a great variety to manage in our challenging climate.”

Steve Wilson, Superintendent
Pinehurst No. 3 and Pinehurst No. 5

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- Bob Farren, CGCS, Golf Course and Grounds Manager

"G2 + 8 = Pinehurst"
### Superintendent profile

**THE OLD MAN AND THE CCC**

Terry Bonar discusses what it takes to succeed at a private club for many years.

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### Turfgrass management

**THE PUSH FOR PERFECTION**

Golfers and superintendents strive for the best possible course conditions.

*Cover credit: Vasko Misikovic | iStock.com*

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### Personnel management

**BEHIND THE DECISION**

Facilities involve several people, have multiple criteria and use different avenues when hiring the right person for the job.

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### Facility operations

**LISTENING TO YOUR CUSTOMERS**

Obtain feedback from golfers before making changes at your facility.

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### Pond management

**WATER WORLD**

Budgets, labor and environmental issues shape aquatic herbicide management programs.

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### Course development

**BUILDING ISSUES**

GCBAA members discuss the impact of poor water quality and appropriate budgeting on construction.

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### Facility planning

**A GRAND PLAN**

There's much to consider when designing an ideal maintenance facility.

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### Professional development

**CLOSER TIES**

Carolinans superintendent forms relationships with a group of international greenkeepers.

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### Turfgrass varieties

**NEW ON THE MARKET**

Demanding course conditions inspire new turfgrass varieties.

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### Course construction

**WHAT A LONG STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN**

It took a municipal course in California 20 years to come to fruition.

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### Product features

**OUTSOURCING AQUATIC NEEDS**

A superintendent contracts pond maintenance because it's cost effective.

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GROW PLAYABLE, HEALTHY TURF
A look at factors that damage chloroplasts and the defenses that protect them.

GREENS MANAGEMENT
Water management, aerification and topdressing are keys to desired firmness.
NO DETAIL TOO SMALL

Flash back. I met Rich Gagnon a few years ago at a GCSAA seminar at the Golf Industry Show in Orlando. I asked about him and his career. He told me about his recent arrival at Segregansett Country Club in Taunton, Mass. We also chatted about industry trends including managing a maintenance budget.

These are how solid stories are unearthed and interesting ideas are publicized — that and carousing from bar to bar at the various conferences listening to attendees whisper, “Now, this is off the record of course,” with a pat on the back and a crooked smile. But I digress.

Fast forward. Earlier this month, I received a call from Rich, with whom I hadn’t spoken in quite some time. After recalling our first encounter, he proceeded to tell me about an unusual complaint from some club members. They wanted him to stop using “metal” flagsticks because balls bounce too hard off them and are less likely to fall into the hole. Rich was using three-quarter-inch tapered tournament flagsticks, but members wanted him to return to using one-half-inch solid regulation fiberglass flagsticks.

Boy, I thought, how often is this actually happening that members would complain about it? Well, Rich said he thought the same thing when he first heard the complaint but then assured me of the number of consistently good golfers — damn near scratch — who belong to the club.

So, Rich decided to test three different flagsticks from the same manufacturer — a one-half-inch solid regulation fiberglass flagstick, a three-quarter-inch tapered tournament flagstick and a one-inch aluminum/fiberglass tournament flagstick. Well, lo and behold, the complaints were valid, but barely. Based on 5-percent difference in their favor, it appeared that for every 20 chip shots that hit the flagstick dead-on, one more fell into the cup with the one-half-inch flagstick compared to the three-quarter-inch tapered flagstick. It was a big enough difference to better a golfer score, and we all know how important that is. (For those wanting the name of the company who makes the flagsticks Rich tested, e-mail him at sccturf@hotmail.com because I don’t want to be accused of favoring or promoting one manufacturer over another.)

After hearing about Rich’s flagstick test, I was struck by the amount of time and consideration he put into something that I originally thought was just plain silly. So, in turn, I ask you to think about some of the member complaints at your club or course throughout the years. How many were a complete waste of time? How many actually turned out to be valid?

In this competitive industry, there are many capable superintendents who do above-average jobs. But it’s the little things, such as testing different flagsticks to see how balls react after hitting them, that separate you from the pack. It’s important for you to be receptive to new ideas at whatever stage you’re at in your career.

Now, I don’t know if Rich will get a raise because of this test or be appointed “superintendent for life,” but I bet members at Segregansett will remember Rich’s flagstick test for a while. As a result, I’m sure more of them will realize to what extent he will go to improve their golf experience.

This is one small example of the dedication to a job and a facility that many superintendents exhibit every day. It’s the kind of dedication that earns respect and gratitude from those members or golfers who you thought would never give it to you.
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Oct. 16-18
INTERNATIONAL CONSTRUCTION AND UTILITY EQUIPMENT EXPOSITION
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Nov. 2-6
THE FIRST TEE 10TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING
Hyatt Regency Riverfront
Jacksonville, Fla.
Call 904-940-4300, or visit www.thefirsttee.org.

Nov. 12-15
CAROLINAS GCSA CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW
Myrtle Beach (S.C.) Convention Center
Call 800-476-4272, or visit www.cgcsa.org.

Nov. 13-15
EMPIRE STATE GREEN INDUSTRY SHOW
Rochester (N.Y.) Riverside Convention Center
Call 800-873-5467, or visit www.nysta.org.

Nov. 14-16
PENN STATE GOLF TURF CONFERENCE
Nittany Lion Inn
State College, Pa.
Call 877-326-5996, or visit www.paturf.org.

Dec. 4-6
NEW JERSEY GREEN EXPO TURF AND LANDSCAPE CONFERENCE
Taj Mahal
Atlantic City, N.J.
Call 973-812-6467, or visit www.njturfgrass.org.

Dec. 4-6
OHIO TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & SHOW
Greater Columbus (Ohio) Convention Center
Call 888-683-3445, or visit www.ohioturfgrass.org.

Dec. 4-6
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW
Holiday Inn – Denver International Airport
Call 303-770-2220, or visit www.rmtra.org.

Dec. 9-11
THE 28TH INTERNATIONAL IRRIGATION SHOW
San Diego Convention Center
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Jan. 8-10, 2008
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TURF CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW
Valley Forge Convention Center
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Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2008
GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
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Feb. 25-28, 2008
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA TURF CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW
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Flying high: success amid the summer heat

This year, summer weather has presented a challenge for golf course operators in many regions of the country. Rounds generally decline when temperatures rise close to triple digits. Circling Raven Golf Club in Worley, Idaho, was faced with this dilemma. During July, the temperature exceeded 100 degrees F for two weeks straight.

"Every day, play basically just cut off at noon," says David Christenson, director of golf at the 18-hole course, which is adjacent to the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel. "We looked at all the cancelled reservations and said if we don't use these existing tee times, we won't come close to meeting budget."

Christenson found ways to make the course enticing, even in the sweltering heat. Those who still weren't buying it were drawn to deals in the clubhouse. At the end of July, the club was ahead of budget, making it 47 straight months the course's revenue has grown, and it was in a good position for August.

"We're always exceeding the previous months' and year-to-date revenue numbers," Christenson says.

The club kept this streak alive during the heat wave by printing business cards with promotional opportunities to try to soothe the sting the heat caused. Deals included discounts in the pro shop and reduced green fees during certain days and times.

Christenson credits much of Circling Raven's success to its people. The staff, including starters and pro shop attendants, recently participated in a program to brush up on customer service skills. Due in part to some of these practices, the course exceeded its merchandising mark of last July, and by Aug. 1, the course had filled 85 percent of the month's tee times.

Christenson has been in the business since the early 1990s, when he worked at Indian Canyon Golf Course in Spokane, Wash., a 45-minute drive from Circling Raven. The golf industry was more robust at that time.

"There was no marketing," he says. "People just lined up and waited in the parking lot in the dark to play the course."

When he came to help open Circling Raven in 2003, the industry had taken a downward turn.

"Everything changed with recent events, especially Sept. 11," he says.

Those who continue to travel usually don't visit the same spot twice, Christenson says. Therefore, he focuses on attracting the customer base that's closer to home. Even these golfers aren't coming out in the same numbers they used to, so courses have to be creative to boost the number of repeat visitors and golfers who are new to the game.

"We need to know our customers and tailor services to meet the needs of the people who are coming out," Christenson says. "People have less time, aren't spending as much money and don't want to commit to a five-hour game of golf. It seems like people are more family focused and have different recreational pursuits."

Because of this, golf course marketers have to be more innovative than before to increase the number of rounds. But before a course can cater to its customers, it has to be clear about its own identity.

"The first step is to figure out who you are and what makes you unique," Christenson says. "How are you different from the facility down the road?"

Christenson read dozens of library books about the course's owners, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, before coming up with the Circling Raven name. He named it after one of the tribe's first leaders. His reasoning was that it reflected the tribe and course well and drew attention as well.

Once golfers are drawn to the amenity, the relationship must be maintained to keep a steady customer base, Christenson says.

"For us, the successful operators moving forward, we're beyond the days in which golfers walk through doors and you didn't collect any information," he says. "My approach is almost