

# Reader forum

## Certification pro and con

David Harmon's Viewpoint article regarding GCSAA certification (GOLF BUSINESS, Aug. '78) and Mr. Mooney's confirmation of that article (GOLF BUSINESS, Reader Forum, November) are simplistic in nature and fail to recognize the changes in the profession of golf course management.

The past several years have seen many changes in golf course management practices. An excellent understanding of chemical application, recordkeeping, water management, etc. are needed to succeed in today's world of fine turf management. More importantly, the next decade will surely necessitate an even greater understanding of these management practices. To me, it is in this regard that the GCSAA certification program has its greatest merit. Through attaining certification a golf course superintendent proves that he or she has an excellent grasp of not only theoretical management practices, but of practical experience as well. A person must have completed at least 5 years as a superintendent prior to his even taking the exam. Much of what is being tested will surely be known through having experienced many, many turf situations. "A few dollars and some memorizing" will not gain anyone certification status nor does "10 years on any golf course" prove anything other than a person can keep a job, not maintain fine quality turf.

The suggestion that an on-the-job inspection of a superintendent's course be made as part of the certification process is unfair and unrealistic. Such a committee, no matter how objective they propose to be, would have preconceived standards by which they were to judge the golf course. Given today's expectations, these standards would of course be high. Where would that leave the superintendent of an 18-hole course with a \$50,000 budget, a crew of three, and unwatered fairways? Fair and comprehensive testing of both theoretical and practical knowledge is the only way!

Future golf course superintendents will have to be highly skilled, well-educated, and tested professionals. If our profession is to attain the acceptance and respect of the golfing public that it deserves, it will gain it only through this type of individual. The superintendent who continually refuses to take advantage of educational programs, i.e. conferences, seminars, short courses, and programs such as certification, will have no future in the world of golf course management in the 1980's and beyond.

Becoming a Certified Golf Course Superintendent does not guarantee the best jobs or the highest salary. Certification should, however, illustrate to employers that here is a candidate who has taken advantage of every educational opportunity available, who has

extrapolated the most from his practical experiences, and who desires the most of his profession, that of being a true golf course superintendent.

**Stephen G. Cadenelli**  
Golf course superintendent  
The Country Club of New Canaan  
New Canaan, Conn.

How refreshing to read David Harmon's recent article on certification in GOLF BUSINESS. He begs to differ from the usual run-of-the-mill conformity, and I heartily agree with his viewpoint.

Having been appointed golf superintendent at St. George's in 1963 and hosted the Canadian Open in 1968 and Peter Jackson Golf Classic in 1975 and 1978, I think I have earned some degree of proficiency along the way.

The most rewarding side benefit, however, has been the opportunity to nurture individuality and creativity. We are reminded of this when we play other golf courses and constantly pick up new ideas.

Certification is a way to go, but not necessarily *the* way. Certification or not, there always will be those among us who will seek and attain the highest levels in this most challenging profession.

**William Hynd**  
Golf superintendent  
St. George's Golf and Country Club  
Islington, Ontario, Canada

## Why be a superintendent?

In his Viewpoint article in the November GOLF BUSINESS, "Why be a golf course superintendent?", Gene Burress presents very valid arguments against choosing the job of golf course superintendent for a vocation. Having been associated with golf for all of my half century of life, having been born in the superintendent's home at a golf club 50 years ago this past October, I feel that many of his statements make the job a challenge that many men must have in order to feel that they are providing an area of recreation for the enjoyment of many as well as a feeling of self-satisfaction of a job well done under many times (as stated by Mr. Burress) "very adverse conditions."

The compensation in return for value received is definitely a significant basis for not considering the lifetime vocation of golf course superintendent. On a comparable basis of everyday authority the golf course superintendent would probably have a title such as vice president of production or vice president of management with annual salary of \$50,000 or more, and possibly higher, with

many strong right arms to assist him. In a large sense we as superintendents are at fault for this.

Having just recently been in the position of job searching I received many good sources of those seeking superintendents. Unfortunately, about 85 percent were in the range of \$11-15,000, and these were at some prestigious clubs all over the country. Some were as low as \$8,800 and others as high as \$35,000. Not over 5 percent were in the \$20,000+ range and about 10 percent were under the median. That isn't a very conducive salary to raise a family and put youngsters through college. Yet I'm quite satisfied that more than 95 percent of all of these positions available were filled within 90 days.

Many of these positions were vacated as well as filled by those with CGCS qualifications. I don't have a particular bone to pick about CGCS, but the golf players of today must be made aware of the GCSAA in total — as they are of the PGA. Only then will CGCS set aside those men who have attained the title as special men who are a little more interested, qualified, and desirable of furthering their abilities as golf course superintendents.

Let's face it, all things being equal between applicants, the man with the lowest bid for the job in salary gets it — GCSAA certified golf superintendent or not — and that is the major fault of our profession. I was personally involved with three ideal positions in our area where highly qualified men were sought. Yet, by not standing together and supporting each other, all three jobs were taken at \$4,000 to \$9,600 less money than was offered me and other men more qualified for the job. None were filled by CGCS men and one was filled by a college graduate not even eligible for Class B in GCSAA.

Yes, Mr. Burress, you are so right. And until we all stand or fall together, without strong support locally, statewide, regionally, as well as nationally, we as superintendents will remain the bottom rung of the club triumvirate ladder. After 50 great years of professional organization, I say each man in the profession should vow a vow unto himself to begin today to do something about it. Let us all do even more to make our profession as desirable to others as it is to us.

**Dan L. Hall Jr.**  
Golf course superintendent  
Imperial Golf Club  
Naples, Fla.

*Although Dan has no one to do typing for him, he felt strongly enough about the ideas expressed here that he dictated his letter to the editor onto a cassette and mailed the tape to GOLF BUSINESS. That is true dedication to one's profession. — Ed.*

*To voice your opinion on the above and other issues, please use the Reader Forum Card bound into the back of this magazine or write to Editor, GOLF BUSINESS, 9800 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102.*