

Winds *of* Change

Golf is trying to shed its white image. What will it take — and how can you help?

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LARRY POWELL, SUPERINTENDENT OF Clearview GC in East Canton, Ohio, understands the hardship that golf's legacy of racism can inflict. His father, William, was forced to fund Clearview's construction privately when white banks wouldn't loan him the money because he was black.

Larry's pride in the beautiful course his father struggled so hard to build rings clear as he discusses the course's history, its present and its future. From the start, there's no mistaking that Clearview formed the core of his being.

He speaks excitedly for more than an hour about how he uses the course as a testing ground for new ideas that will benefit the entire industry, including water conservation practices, experimental grass varieties and even hydroponic technology from NASA. His vi-

sion of the course clearly focuses on the future. But when Larry reflects on the difficulties minorities, including his father, have faced in the golf industry, he turns sober.

"I know there were people in my father's day who wanted to keep blacks out of golf," he says. "But I wasn't going to let that stand in the way of doing something I always wanted to do. It's not about black and white at this course. It's about green. It's about caring for the course."

The Powells have succeeded against what



Larry Powell, superintendent of Clearview GC in East Canton, Ohio, watched his father build the course he now cares for, despite facing racism within the industry.



appears to be overwhelming odds, if you believe the statistics. To say the ranks of minority superintendents are thin would understate the case. According to a 1998 GCSAA membership survey of 15,310 Class A, B and C members, only 406 identified themselves as minorities — less than 3 percent. Blacks — just 29 in all — make up two-tenths of 1 percent of the membership. While that doesn't include more than 3,000 members who chose not to answer the question, the numbers show

an industry still grappling with the changing demographic of the American work force.

As superintendents struggle to find workers, minority communities offer the golf industry a golden opportunity to change those numbers. But since they'll have to discard traditional notions of recruitment and put in extra work to reach out, superintendents might wonder what the payoff is for them. The payoff, says Mike Hughes, executive director of the National Golf

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Course Owners Association, is that changing the face of the business side of golf will help attract new golfers to the game.

"If you're going to attract golfers from communities who haven't traditionally been involved in the game, it makes sense that golf courses should hire employees that reflect those constituencies," Hughes says. "That means putting people into leadership roles throughout the golf industry that will understand and relate to the markets you're trying to reach."

Past behavior discourages groups

Golf's history of overt racism has left many minorities wondering whether they'd be welcome to participate in any of the

industry's career tracks. Examples abound, from the clause in the PGA's charter preventing blacks from becoming professionals (a ban not lifted until 1961) to Shoal Creek owner Hall Thompson's comment before the 1990 PGA Championship that his club didn't discriminate against anyone "except blacks."

Given that legacy, minorities may be excused if they're not flocking to join the industry, says Ken Edwards, John Deere's business manager for its golf and turf products division.

"It's tougher for minorities to get involved in golf because of its history than it is to do something else, like get a job in computer science," Edwards says. "Many minorities who have been banging their heads against golf's walls for years feel it's time for them to give up."



JERRY MANN

He Had A Dream

ALL WILLIAM POWELL, A BLACK AMERICAN, wanted to do when he returned from defending his country — which at one time refused blacks the right to vote — was play golf. While in England during World War II, Powell played some of the world's most famous courses without his skin color being an issue for the British. So he hoped America had changed in his time away.

It had not. He found the courses he had scorched as a scratch golfer as captain of the Minerva (Ohio) High School golf team closed to him because of his race. No matter, Powell thought, "I'll just build my own course." But he says white-owned banks in Canton refused to loan him the money to buy a run-down dairy farm in East Canton, Ohio, and he says the government refused him a GI loan, despite the fact that he had risked his life — in a segregated Army — dur-

ing World War II. Powell's burning desire to play golf, however, would not be denied.

Powell eventually asked two black doctors to whom he was teaching golf to become his partners in the course. The three of them pooled their money to purchase the 78-acre dairy farm in 1946. Working the second shift as a security guard, he would sleep four hours at night, get up in the morning and build the course. He opened the first nine holes in 1948.

"It was a lot of work to build, but what choice did I have?" Powell, 83, says with a grin. "I wanted to play golf."

In 1959, Powell bought out his partners. He finally saved enough money to quit his second job in 1964 and devote all his energy to caring for the golf course. In 1978, he added nine more holes to the course. It remains one of the few black-owned, black-

built course in the United States and is in the process of being added to the National Register of Historic Places — and an unusual source has offered to help.

The PGA of America, which had a clause in its charter until 1961 that forbade blacks from becoming professional golfers ("I could have competed with Ben Hogan and Bobby Jones, had I been given the chance," Powell says), has joined the efforts to get the course designated as a national historic landmark.

The organization has also pledged to help renovate the course. The proposed changes will update the 130-acre property, enlarge the course from its current 5,800 yards to 6,300 yards, level the practice and teeing areas and create a 1.4-acre lake to support a new irrigation system. To offset construction costs, the PGA is negotiating with corporate partners in the golf industry to donate materials and services to the project. Architects Michael Hurdzan and Pete Dye are working closely with the Powell family to oversee the renovation.

"The PGA of America is pleased to be involved with Clearview GC because of the property's historical and cultural significance," says Will Mann, PGA president. "Clearview and the Powell family are inspirational examples of entrepreneurship in the golf business. We hope the perpetuation of the Clearview and Powell legacy will inspire future generations."

For Powell, the renovations allow him to complete his dream course.

"These renovations existed since I drew up the original plans back in 1946, but I never had enough money to do them the way I wanted to," Powell says. "Now with the help of the PGA, Clearview will become the golf course I'd always hoped it would be."

It's his dream come true.

But Edwards, who is black, says the GCSAA and other golfing organizations have always supported his efforts at John Deere, and he'd recommend the industry as a place of employment to other minority groups.

The perception remains — even among minorities working on golf courses — that it's difficult to get ahead in a predominantly white industry, however. Donald Coleman, who joined Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert, Calif., in 1996 as a machine operator, says minorities have a difficult time getting opportunities in the industry. Coleman, who is black, says he trained many of Desert Willow's employees who went on to get assistant superintendent jobs. He said he was hurt when he was passed over for promotions.

"There were times that I wondered if my race was holding me back, although I couldn't ever be sure," Coleman says. "It was clear that I had to do something extra to make myself more attractive to employers."

Along came Rudy Zazueta, superintendent at Desert Willow, who joined the course last year and mentored Coleman. Now Coleman, who entered the industry in 1978 at 19 after spending his high school years mowing lawns and helping landscape contractors, expects to graduate from College of the Desert in Palm Desert with a turf degree in 2001

The slow process of change

For now, turf schools offer little hope that they will be a catalyst for immediate change. GolfDome conducted an informal survey of the country's top turf schools about minority participation in their programs. It revealed black students are rare, and only a handful of other minorities have passed through the programs in recent years. It's not for lack of institutional pressure to diversify, however.

"The administration has come down on us hard on many occasions for our lack of ethnic diversity," says George Hamilton, senior lecturer in the turfgrass program at Penn State University. "It's definitely an area where we have to do better, but it's not as easy as one might think."

Hamilton says schools must find innovative ways to interest more minorities in the profession, perhaps through alliances with colleges that have large minority populations.

Historically black colleges, many of which were founded as agricultural schools and have active turfgrass programs, form a network that could be valuable to the industry if called upon (for a list of historically black colleges, visit <http://ledonline.com/cq/hbcu>). Many of these colleges also have Web sites where employers can post job opportunities, and career development and placement offices can help employers find students for internships.

Sarah Stringer, director of career development at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Ala., says she'd love to work with the golf course maintenance industry, since many of her students have never considered it as a career.

"The golf industry has never contacted us, and we haven't

Minority Membership

In its 1998 membership survey, the GCSAA offered its 15,310 Class A, Class B and Class C members an opportunity to indicate their ethnicity.

Compare those numbers to the U.S. population in general:

	GCSAA	U.S. POPULATION*	PERCENTAGES	
			GCSAA	U.S.
Total	15,310	272,878	100.0%	100.0%
White	11,364	224,692	74.2%	82.3%
Hispanic	213	31,365	1.3%	11.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	164	10,887	1.2%	4%
Black	29	34,903	.01%	12%
Native American	N/A	2,396	N/A	.08%
No Preference	48	N/A	.03%	N/A
Left Question Blank	3,492	23%	N/A	N/A

* in thousands

SOURCE: GCSAA AND U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

been as aggressive as we should have been in contacting it," Stringer says. "It's a natural fit for both sides, so you'd think we'd be able to come together."

"It's going to be a long process to change the face of the industry," Hamilton says. "There's just not enough minorities who are interested in coming to the turf schools. We're trying, but we're not succeeding."

Tuskegee's Stringer says racism doesn't always explain low minority participation in a profession. Sometimes it's as simple as a lack of communication between groups. Once groups

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discuss common interests instead of differences, it often opens new opportunities, she says.

Early exposure a must

John David, president of the Multicultural Golf Association of America (MGAA), agrees that the biggest barrier to minority participation in the industry is lack of communication.

"The industry has not done a good job of presenting the job opportunities to the kids," says David, whose Westhampton Beach, N.Y.-based organization coordinates eight-week golf clinics that focus on introducing underprivileged children to the game. "If you don't reach out to these youngsters, most of whom don't have ready access to a course, they'll never know the industry exists."

Attracting minority candidates to take lower-paying jobs in the suburbs when higher-paying jobs at fast-food restaurants are around the corner isn't easy, says John King, assistant superintendent for the city of Albuquerque, N.M., and former superintendent at Santa Fe CC in Santa Fe, N.M. King says pay scales in the industry must rise.

"We're competing with jobs that are paying well above minimum wage," King says. "We have to bring our wages up to scale if we're going to compete for the attention of minority employees."

It also helps to be bilingual. Bryan McFerren, superintendent at the University of Maryland GC in College Park, Md., urges su-



Kevin Hutchins, superintendent at the Presidio GC in San Francisco (kneeling), teaches kids about agronomy at an MGAA-sponsored event.

perintendents to learn a second language so they can communicate more easily with staff members who may not speak English.

"Some [superintendents] are stubborn and say, 'I'm not going to learn their language. They should learn mine,'" McFerren says. "If you take that attitude, however, you risk cutting yourself off from reaching an entire group of people that will make great workers."

McFerren says he advertised a position on a local Hispanic

PGA's Progress

The PGA of America has come a long way since it lifted its 1961 ban on blacks as members of the organization. Jim Awtrey, CEO, says that in the last 39 years, his organization has worked hard to include minorities in the golf business.

"The minority community is an important aspect of the PGA's commitment to golf," Awtrey says. "Attracting qualified minorities to the game and business of golf is one of our objectives."

Awtrey says the PGA's diversity department created several programs that expose inner-city kids to golf and administers minority scholarship programs with the 10 U.S. colleges and universities that conduct PGA-sanctioned professional golf management programs. The PGA also provides employment seminars and career days for minorities interested in joining the business.

"We will continue with plans to facilitate more minority involvement in the game," Awtrey says.

radio station and was overwhelmed by the response. Within three days, McFerren says he received 20 phone calls about the job from people who had heard the radio spot.

"I wasn't prepared for the number of responses I got," McFerren says. "It just takes a little creativity to reach new markets."

He also recommends recruiting Hispanic workers from within an existing crew.

Joe Stegman, manager of maintenance and recruiting de-

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Superintendents Speak Out

"HISPANICS ARE NOT GETTING A FAIR shake. We take advantage of their great work ethic and don't do enough to build up their self-esteem. I constantly have to remind myself to be fair and not let my latent, small white-town upbringing come out of dormancy. That said, prejudice is still prevalent in the private sector in Chicago."

Oscar Miles

CGCS

The Merit Club
Chicago, Ill.

"HERE IS MY UGLY SIDE COMING OUT. I love immigrants. Both my parents were [immigrants], but they also learned English very quickly in order to survive. It irritates me that we have to learn another language in order to communicate with workers in this country. Don't

get me wrong, I'm not picking on the Spanish. I have a Lebanese guy working for me — 22 years in this country and he can't speak English. I'm not going to learn Lebanese. When I need to explain something to him, I call his kids and let them explain. Would any one of you move to another country and expect the staff to learn your language? I don't think so."

Anthony Grieco

CGCS

Silver Creek CC
Hellerton, Pa.

THE PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES in the business is low at this time. The First Tee Program will introduce more minorities to the game of golf and could potentially introduce minorities to the maintenance of golf courses. Anyone

who has dedication and drive will thrive in the business — this goes for everyone.

Marc Pucky

Assistant Superintendent
The Country Club
Pepper Pike, Ohio

"ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF minorities are small, there are more minorities involved in the golf industry than ever before. They will continue to increase as more people are introduced to the game. I'm not sure it is an issue, and I do not believe anyone is holding them back."

Jim Nicol

CGCS

Hazeltine National GC
Chaska, Minn.

"ANYONE WHO IS INNOVATIVE, dedicated, and hard working with the ability to lead should join the superintendent ranks

regardless of race, creed or color. America is a melting pot, and anyone with a passion for golf course maintenance should have the opportunity to act on their dreams."

Mark McCarel

Assistant Superintendent
The Country Club
Pepper Pike, Ohio

"TIGER WOODS and the USGA may drive up the number of minorities involved in golf at all levels. I believe that a love of the game can only be enhanced by exposure to it, and the younger the better. The USGA's initiative to keep golf affordable is commendable. I believe it's all about exposure, and the understanding that when you find a job you love you will never work a day in your life."

Greg O'Heron

Superintendent
Peterborough Golf & CC
Peterborough, Ontario

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velopment of Palm Springs, Calif.-based American Golf Corp., says his company acclimates its superintendents to find alternative labor sources as part of the company's training program.

Stegman says some of the company's superintendents have recruited successfully at churches, high schools and community centers. He also suggests advertising in newspapers that specifically target minority communities.

"You can't wait for résumés of minority candidates to fall into your lap," Stegman says. "Sometimes it's not the easiest way to recruit, but it will enrich your staff with new ideas and new insight that you might not get otherwise."

In 1998, MGAA added a golf course maintenance component to its clinics, David says. The kids enjoyed learning about the agronomy of a course, he says.

"Many of these kids would have never thought of course maintenance as a career because they wouldn't have been exposed to it," David says. "You've got to get them involved early."

Involvement is a word heard often when the subject turns to including more minorities in the industry. Early inclusion is vital if the game and its offshoots — including maintenance — are to be viewed as something other than an industry that excludes people who are not white and rich.

Barbara Douglas, president of the National Minority Golf Foundation (NGMF), says providing affordable golf in urban areas would expand golf beyond its suburban roots. Her organization plans to refurbish 100 courses around the country

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in those areas, and she hopes that exposure will help minorities understand the opportunities the game offers.

Douglas says she hopes her organization will become a clearinghouse for minority scholarship and internship opportunities. The NMGF's Web site, www.nmgf.org, has space for scholarship and internship information, as well as space to post job opportunities.

"If you can get them playing, you may be able to keep them in the industry," Douglas says. "It's not going to happen overnight, but if only one out of every 10 kids you introduce to the game sticks with it, then you're going to have a profile that changes over time.

"But you have to be active in the community on a continual basis so they know who you are," she adds. "Otherwise, you're just someone who came to visit."

The GCSAA plans to foster that long-term approach to minority communities among its members in coming years. Kim Heck, senior director of career development for the GCSAA, says the organization will support superintendents with a tabletop presentation package featuring pamphlets, videotapes and other information about the profession so they can recruit at career fairs. But the goal she puts the greatest priority on for 2001 is to educate superintendents about the importance of becoming visible in their communities.

"Get involved in children's lives," Heck says. "Most of our members would make great role models. By getting involved and making a difference, you not only serve your community, you expose kids to an industry they may not have considered as a viable career option before."

Ken Sakai, president of Golf Pacific Management Co., which develops and manages golf courses in the United States and countries around the Pacific Rim, says minorities, like others who enter the industry, need mentors. He credits those who helped him choose a direction early in his career. Combined with his own hard work, Sakai, who is Japanese-American, says his mentors offered him advice on what steps he needed to take to get ahead in the industry.

"In my day, opportunities for minorities were limited to those who knew [the right] people," Sakai says. "Those connections are still vital, even as more opportunities open up."

Larry Powell, who has been a Class A member of the GCSAA since 1973, credits his family with teaching him how to work effectively in an industry that once tried to keep his father out. He's also a patient man, and he knows the only way to change the face of the profession is to work with fellow superintendents to do so.

"I'm used to being a minority in organizations I've been involved in," Powell says. "I was the only black student in both my elementary and high schools. So being a member of the GCSAA as a minority doesn't bother me. You can only change an organization if you join it and change it from within." ■

Partners for Diversity

GCSAA recognizes the importance of forming partnerships to promote the industry to minorities. Here is a partial list of the initiatives with which the organization is involved:

Scotts Scholars — three annual scholarships for women, minorities, people with disabilities and the financially underprivileged.

National Minority Golf Foundation — exposes the profession through NMGF's junior golf program; participates in NMGF seminars and conferences; serves as a resource to minority junior golf programs that belong to the NMGF, including the Young Golfers of America; and supports the National Minority Junior Golf Scholarship Association financially.

PGA Tour Minority Internship Program — provides internship possibilities to the program.

Tiger Woods Foundation — provides superintendent speakers at foundation events.

Multicultural Golf Association of America — sponsors a golf clinic for the organization at its annual meeting in November.

National Minority College Golf Scholarship annual championship — attends a career fair in conjunction with this event.

The First Tee program — GCSAA members serve on First Tee chapter boards of directors, advise on agronomic issues and contribute tips to a participant manual on golf etiquette.

Jeff Bollig, director of communications for GCSAA, says the organization is also holding discussions with the PGA of America to discuss opportunities in golf for minorities and traditionally black colleges.

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