Going Postal

About That Southern Hills Work Crew ...

I read with interest — and some concern — Larry Aylward’s fea-
ture article on superintendent John Szklinski and Southern Hills CC (“Labor of Love,” June).

Having worked with former Southern Hills superintendent Bob Randquist and the mainte-
nance staff at Southern Hills during the design and construc-
tion of the club’s alternate nine-hole course, I was disappointed to read comments made in the article alluding to the mainte-
nance crew’s lack of a work ethic. The article also seemed to infer that this lack of work ethic was a residual from Randquist’s tenure as superintendent.

From working with Randquist and his crew and having admired his talents over the years, I have a different perspective. It is my opinion that he is at the forefront of his profession. With regard to agronomics, personal profession-
alisim and staff preparation, I con-
Tend to groom golf courses, but to infer that we are re-
ponsible for golf’s popularity is uncalled for.

I agree with the article (“Van-
quish Vandalism,” May) that one of the best preventative meth-
ods is hiring students and teachers to work on the course.

The students and teachers I’ve hired take such pride in the course that they exert peer pres-
sure on their classmates who might vandalize the course. In addi-
tion, on the rare occasions when vandalism occurs, the perpetra-
tors usually can’t keep their mouths shut and word quickly gets around school. Then the good guys (those students and teachers who work for me) take over to let us know who the vandal are.

I hired the high school athletic director 15 years ago, and he’s been with me ever since. His in-
volve ment has led me to hire other great teachers and students from the school, many of whom come back season after season.

John Szklinski: Sports Illustrated called him a “taskmaster.”

Aylward responds: One of the toughest challenges John Szklinski endured at Southern Hills was loss of staff, and I would have been blind not to report it. The

reason so many employees quit the demanding Szklinski’s staff was because they didn’t get along with him or agree with his ways. I was only reporting what Szklinski said about his staff.

The story was not intended to make Bob Randquist look like a poor superintendent. Randquist left Southern Hills because it was time to move on. Management hired Szklinski because they liked his work ethic and en-
thusiasm. This kind of thing goes on every day in every profession.

Szklinski acknowledges that he does things differently than Randquist, but he has the ut-
most respect for him. “He’s an institution in this industry,” Szklinski says.

Fighting Back

Having dealt with vandalism over the last 22 years, I’ve seen it all. I agree with the article (“Van-
quish Vandalism,” May) that one of the best preventative meth-
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Jerry Coldiron, CGCS
Boone Links/Lassing Pointe Florence, Ky.

Where Is GCSAA Taking Us?

You did an excellent job on your editorial about GCSAA’s e-com-
merce initiative (Flagstick, June). Your commentary on GCSAA’s e-commerce initiative was artic-
ulate, to the point and relevant to today’s political agenda. Let’s hope the GCSAA reads and under-
stands what you are saying and doesn’t put on its blinders because its money-making idea is being pooh-poohed.

Where is the political arm of the GCSAA taking us — and to what end?

John K. MacKenzie Jr., CGCS
North Oaks GC
North Oaks, Minn.

I enjoyed your views on the e-
commerce pilot program by the GCSAA. You are correct: Distribu-
tors do bring value to superin-
tendents. E-commerce has a place in the market, but it will not replace relationships that have been developed for years.

When disease breaks out or irrigation/maintenance equip-
ment needs immediate attention, the relationships between cus-
tomers and distributors become crucial.

Jeff L. Mobley
T&D Marketing Manager
ProSource One
Memphis, Tenn.

Editor’s Update: See this month’s Flagstick for an update on GCSAA’s e-commerce initiative.

Image Isn’t Everything

Thank you for your commentary [Pin High, June] on GCSAA’s image campaign. It’s important for the GCSAA to pursue its image campaign, but let’s keep this in perspective.

First, superintendents maintain golf courses so that people can play a game. This is a simple concept. GCSAA President Tommy Witt’s contention — “if there weren’t educated superin-
tendents to groom golf courses, the game wouldn’t be this popu-
lar” — is indicative of an arro-
gance that is overwhelming this profession. We enhance the game, but to infer that we are re-
sponsible for golf’s popularity is an extravagant exaggeration.

Secondly, Witt’s denigration of other professions is uncalled for. After all, window washers and janitors pay my salary.

Lastly, the ads that you men-
tioned portrayed the stereotypi-
cal “greenkeeper” with tongue-
in-cheek. They are parodies, plain and simple.

John S. Cooper, Superintendent
Atwood Homestead GC
Rockford, Ill.

He Likes Mike

I’m pleased to see Michael R. Heacock join Golfdom’s editorial staff [Been There, Seen That, June].

I had the pleasure of serving nearly 10 years alongside Hea-
cock at American Golf Corp, and I have benefited many times from his wise consultation.

He is a premier practitioner and a truly great mind in turfgrass and golf facility management.

Bill Johnson, CGCS
Field Sales Engineer
Firestone Building Products Co.
Carmel, Ind.

Feel like going postal? We’d like to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at familorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.