sional development,” Kreger says. Consequently, he adds, clubs are making superintendents pay for the GIS out of their own pockets instead of the club paying for it.

Kreger says if he was a superintendent at a low-budget course and the money to attend a show came out of his own pocket, he’d choose the local show because it offers just as many benefits as the national show.

“When you’re looking at percentages, clubs are paying more for superintendents to go to regional shows instead of national shows,” Kreger says. “They’re relying more on regional shows for educational opportunities. The cuts in budget and the opportunity for education at regional shows is making for the perfect storm.”

Brent Fuhrman, CFO and COO of FarmLinks, the research and demonstra-

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tion facility in Alabama, says regional shows and industry events such as those FarmLinks hosts do not prevent superintendents from attending the GIS.

“We just do not see ourselves as a competitor of the GCSAA,” he says. “We are a complement to the overall educational desire in the industry... Obviously, when you’re dealing with the economic realities in the industry and the demands on people’s time personally and professionally, there are decisions people in the industry have to make on where they’re going to spend their time.”

FarmLinks and the Golf Industry Show offer two different things, Fuhrman says. FarmLinks allows for close interaction and deep conversation among colleagues seeking solutions to problems. National shows, on the other hand, allow superintendents to see all the options available to them.

“From my perspective, what’s great about all these shows is you have an opportunity to see the breadth of options of what is available. There’s a negative in that too in that you can’t dig deep simply because of the time it takes to get around. You go wide but you can’t go deep at a show,” he explains. “But again, if I’m trying to get (educated) I think a show nationally or regionally makes a lot of sense.”

Another potential enemy of a national trade show: the internet.

Mark Woodward, president/owner of Mark Woodward Associates, LLC, a golf operations consulting firm, and a former CEO of GCSAA, says that on-line education caught on with the implementation of the association’s Professional Development Initiative.

“That was about attainable, affordable education, so members could maintain their status as a Class A or certified member,” Woodward says. “People can now take online classes and easily get points at the local level. You can maintain your status by staying home.”

Mona agrees the internet has changed the way business has been conducted in the last five years.

“People don’t just jump on planes and fly halfway across the country to have a lunch meeting anymore,” he says. “People are much more conservative in how they use their time and their resources.”

Another major issue hurting the show is the cost of attending. It was the main obstacle that could keep people from attending, according to a *Golfdom* survey (see page 25).

“I know a lot of superintendents out of work right now. In my mind, the show is still something people should try to go to,” Wood-
ward says. “But I fully understand the flip side of the coin. As I’ve traveled around I’ve heard comments like, ‘I can’t afford to go if my club isn’t sending me.’ And if they can afford it, they can’t afford the time away from the course.”

“When you hear of (attendees) having to minimize their travel expenses and share rooms because they’re paying out of their own pockets, that’s a recipe for disaster,” Justin Apel, executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, says. “I think if the courses made the investment they would see immediate results. That owner, manager or operator ought to attend with the superintendent, because it’s a team effort. There’s just as many educational opportunities for them to attend. And then on the show floor, it’s a team approach.”

Until last year, FarmLinks surveyed superintendents attending its events on their views of the GIS. According to Fuhrman, leading up to the 2011 GIS, 43 percent of responding superintendents said they were skipping the show because of club budget cuts.

But the 2012 show will be different, Fuhrman says.

“I feel there is pent up demand for this particular show,” he observes. Whereas club budget cuts stopped supers from attending the 2011 GIS, he says, “now there is certainly some possibility that people have been holding off on buying equipment. So now they are in a position where they’re going to make some major capital purchases. They now have needs they need to address.”

Evans is confident that this year’s show will at least be bigger than last year’s show — and that’s a move in the right direction.

“I think people hunkered down for a little while and said that the timing wasn’t right,” Evans says. “We’re starting to see that come around. People have gone through that life cycle and they’re saying, ‘OK, I need to get back in the swing of things.’ Our seminar seats are higher by 12 percent. That’s a good sign.”

Shorten the show?

Evans says that the GIS is like the GCSAA’s Super Bowl. There are a lot of practices and games that lead up to that one moment. “I love it because I can go out and attend chapter meetings, meet members, and then there’s a culminating event where we can all come together,” he says.

Evans plans to take care of the big game, and he is happy to say that he’s been thinking about how the GIS can be changed for the better.

“The first thing we’re looking into, and it’s a key factor in bringing people together, is time. I think for the most part, budgets are...Continued on page 24
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stabilizing,” Evans says. “But what they’re not given any more of is time. There’s only so much time in a day.”

Evans adds that the show may be too long, considering that from the beginning of the GCSAA Golf Championship to the end of the educational conference, it’s possible a superintendent could be away from his course and his family for 9 to 10 days.

“That’s an extremely hard thing for people to do. How do we compress the week and consolidate things? Are there items that need to be overlapped? There might be choices you have to make during your stay,” he says, “but you have to shrink down the amount of time it takes to attend the show.”

Mona says he’s seen it firsthand with the Golf 20/20 meeting. Ten years ago, the meeting was 2-and-a-half days. Last year’s meeting was only seven hours long, he says, and yet half the group of 115 left at lunch. He plans on cutting the 2012 meeting to four hours.

“We’ll run it from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., then we’ll say ‘Here’s lunch if you want it, if not, have a great rest of your day,’” Mona explains.

Evans says that a condensed GIS schedule is still at least two years away. Contracts for the GIS — with convention centers, hotels, golf courses — are signed a few years in advance. But he sees that a change to the schedule could come as soon as 2014.

Making the most
What 2012 and Las Vegas holds for the Golf Industry Show remains to be seen. But Mona believes that the GCSAA is doing all it can to keep the show relevant.

“During my tenure, we had it boiled down to three cities — Orlando, New Orleans and San Diego,” Mona recalls. “I’ve noted that Las Vegas and San Antonio are back in. I give GCSAA credit for going to cities that members want to go to.”

If the show never gets back to 300,000 square feet, that might not be the worst thing for attendees.

“Obviously the smaller shows would have a financial impact on the association’s revenue, but I’ve talked to a lot of superintendents who don’t mind the smaller shows of the last few years,” Woodward says.

“Until there’s more rounds, more revenue in the industry, our show is going to stay the same,” Evans says. “Is that a good thing or a bad thing? We’re making the most of it. We’re totally content with where it’s at.”
SUPERS SPEAK OUT:

The GIS Survey

The education is still vital, and the price of attending the Golf Industry Show is the one thing that might keep a superintendent from attending. Those are just a few of the things we learned from our readers.

But how many readers believe that the Golf Industry Show will return to its heyday of the mid-2000s? How many readers wouldn’t miss the GIS for anything? Which is more popular, the national show or your regional show?

All of these questions were answered in late January, when Golfdom sent out a survey to its readers and asked them 8 questions about the Golf Industry Show. We were thrilled to receive a whopping 867 responses to the survey. From chatter in the industry, people from maintenance facilities on the coasts to GCSAA brass in Lawrence, Kan., were looking forward to seeing the results of our survey.

Thank you to everyone who filled out the survey. One lucky participant was rewarded with a $100 gift card. Look for another Golfdom survey soon — this next one will ask superintendents to give their honest opinions on the effort and capital it takes to maintain putting greens.

And now, the results of our GIS survey…

GOLFDOM READERS SHARE THEIR OPINIONS ON THE STATE OF THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW, FROM HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO THEIR CAREERS TO THE ONE THING MOST LIKELY TO KEEP THEM FROM ATTENDING. BY THE GOLFDOM STAFF

**VGES, BABY! ARE YOU GOING TO THE 2012 GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW?**

*We’ll be up $500 by midnight!*  

**Sorry, Vegas, I fold.**  

*62%*

**WHAT’S THE PRIMARY THING THAT COULD (OR DOES) KEEP YOU FROM ATTENDING THE GIS?**

- The price  
  - The travel  
  - The time away from work  
  - The GIS is not that important to me  
  - Nothing could keep me from attending  
  - GCSAA membership

*Continued on page 26*
Survey Says...

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Q

IN RECENT YEARS THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW ATTENDANCE HAS BEEN DROPPING AT AN ALARMING RATE. IF YOU WERE GCSAA CEO FOR A DAY, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO TRY TO HELP THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW STOP THE BLEEDING?

“The educational seminars are awesome, and the networking opportunities are immense. The trade show continues to keep me busy. I think the timing aspect, it may be good for people on the East Coast, there are areas on the West Coast — that’s prime time for some people. Palm Springs, Arizona, that’s their season. They should think about moving the timing.”

MARK BURCHFIELD, superintendent, Victoria Club, Riverside, Calif.

“I think the GIS needs to become more affordable. I think the golf tournament itself plus the actual conference need to be combined into an area where it’s affordable for everyone to go.”

TOM LIVELY, CGCS, TPC San Antonio

“I would stop the GIS show and do maybe four or five big regional shows. That would cut down on travel expenses and be more pertinent to where you’re at.”

DAMON DI GIORGIO, superintendent, Fieldstone Golf Club, Wilmington, Del.

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Survey Says...

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DECISION TIME. THE GM SAID YOU CAN GO TO ONE SHOW, BUT NOT BOTH, IN 2012. ARE YOU GOING TO YOUR REGIONAL SHOW, OR THE NATIONAL?

- I'm staying home for my regional show: 50%
- I'm flying to the GIS: 50%

HAVE THE FOLKS IN LAWRENCE DONE A GOOD JOB OF KEEPING THIS SHOW RELEVANT TO YOU AND YOUR JOB?

- You bet. It's as relevant as ever!: 87%
- It's like 2011 Tiger Woods, just not that big of a deal anymore: 13%

THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW IS LATER THAN USUAL THIS YEAR (FEB. 29TH-MARCH 1ST). HAS THE LATE DATE AFFECTED YOUR DECISION TO ATTEND?

- It's not on Christmas or my wife's birthday, right? Then it's cool: 84%
- They're messing with my Spring prep by holding it so late!: 16%

THE GIS ATTENDANCE HAS PLUMMETED IN RECENT YEARS. DO YOU THINK THE HEYDAY OF 2008 WILL EVER RETURN?

- Someday, but not for a long time: 29%
- Attendance will hold steady to where it is today: 9%
- No. attendance might increase some, but never to 2008 levels again: 46%
- Sorry, attendance is going to keep dwindling: 14%
- It'll be back to 2008 levels, and soon!: 2%

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THE *Golfdom* CONVERSATION:

David Feherty

GOLF’S HOTTEST FUNNYMAN TALKS ABOUT SPEAKING AT THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW, GOLFER EXPECTATIONS AND THE ONE TIME A MOWER GOT AWAY FROM HIM.

BY SETH JONES