



A Smattering That Matters

There are several things to comment on this month, so I'll dive right in and attempt to be brief on each point. As I mentioned last month, I am excited about this new position of leadership and have been very busy in the first few weeks. Any and all positions on the Board are SERVICE commitments, not opportunities to force agendas or feed egos; an obligation to give back to the industry that feeds our families. Our association is very strong, but I expect an improved association a year from now. I welcome our new Board members and speak for the entire Board when I say that our ears are always open to your constructive criticism, ideas and encouragement.

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I would like to thank the membership for the overwhelming support of the dues increase. We were not able to budget on a break-even basis in 2000, but the new dues structure should allow us to do so for the next three years. As your Board, we will be accountable for continuing to put your generous support to good use. Thanks again!

As president, I am obligated to encourage you to participate in YOUR association. We are entering our 75th anniversary year and I can think of no better contribution than each individual member stepping up and doing just a little bit extra. This is an old plea, but never more appropriate. Admittedly, there isn't a need for everyone to host a meeting, serve on a committee or write an article for *On Course*. However, if you are steered in that direction, by all means follow through. Simpler ways to help out exist that can also have a big impact. For example, I was struck by the amount of people I didn't know at the Midwest Turf Clinic. That is probably a consequence of strong growth, but also an opportunity for members, especially the veterans, to welcome new people into the fold. I remember when, as a young and trembling kid, guys like Lenny Berg, Joel Purpur and Peter Leuzinger were friendly to me. Everyone wants to be a part of things, one of the crowd and welcomed as an equal. Saying hello is not particularly painful and can really make a young man's day!

A few other suggestions include: paying your dues on time, attending the educational events (even during the summer when it means a few less minutes on the practice green), signing up for meetings on time and signing up for a golf event as a solo. Go ahead and spend the day playing with someone you don't know for a change. I plan to do so, except for when the college championship rolls around (no, it will not be a net event). Also, untie that assistant and let him or her attend a golf event. They are the future of our association and too often, are behind

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the scenes and not at meetings. If you have not done so, support our social/family events. We already purchased additional tickets for the Kane County Cougars outing and have an extra special evening in mind for our 75th anniversary dinner dance. Lastly, our association has a great Web site, complete with a message board. This is an excellent forum for sharing information. To date, the reading is not as spicy as the GCSAA version, but offers very useful info. Log on!

Switching gears, I should speak to the PDI proposal. The position of the Board was to not get too opinionated until the final version was developed. PDI, as it will be presented in Dallas, is less drastic than the original product. GCSAA went to great efforts to research and pitch the product, gather feedback and amend accordingly. I believe they demonstrated, first-class, how an association can strive to represent, as well as it can, the members' wishes. I guess that's of little consolation if you disagree with the whole premise of PDI. At our January meeting, we will present the PDI proposal again, and individuals in attendance will have the opportunity to vote. The MAGCS will not be casting a unanimous vote in either direction unless dictated by those in attendance. Down and dirty, honestly assessing your abilities and educating yourself in areas where you may be lacking, seems like a pretty good idea to me. Count me in.

A few other hot topics are flying around our business lately; namely unionization and management companies. This would sure be a neat forum to fuel the fire. However, after reading our association's purpose a few times (pretty wordy stuff, I might add), I'm not sure where my opinion furthers our association's purpose. Besides,

I really can't speak for what is best for everyone. I know that as far as unionization is concerned, several clubs were petitioned during the last half of the year. I would strongly suggest making use of the off-season to educate yourself on the topic of unionization. We are going to hear plenty more on this matter and a very proactive approach is an option (carefully chosen words).

Moving on, I hope to see more activity within a couple of our committees this year. We are still in the organizational stages, but one committee that may be revamped is the Employment Committee. I served as chairman last year and nearly 40 positions were advertised through MAGCS. I did a poor job following up on whether the jobs were filled and with a larger committee, that will improve. In the case of superintendent openings, we may send a couple members out to meet the course or club officials in charge of hiring. They often lack direction in their search and ultimately, we hope to give qualified members the fairest opportunity to fill these openings. This has worked well within a few other chapters and rumor is, this is something MAGCS did years ago.

I also look for the Public Relations Committee to be busier. We need to strengthen our ties with the media and continue to promote the positive impact of the golf course superintendent. We have heard this before, but the fact remains, a large percentage of the golfing public still doesn't have the foggiest idea what it is we do. Along with Mike Mumper at Park Ridge Country Club, I am participating in a pilot program offered through the GCSAA. It is called the Chapter Leadership Institute and is geared at training superintendents involved at the board level of their respective chapters.

In November, we met for a two-day session in Lawrence, Kansas, and my "project" for the 16-month program will be improving our association's ties with the media. I have asked Oscar Miles to mentor me through this endeavor and will report as we go along. Fred Behnke has served on the Board for several years and is chairing the Public Relations Committee this year.

That is a little bit of what is going on; I look forward to a busy and productive year. With your input, we can strengthen the association in the year ahead. In closing, I can't resist including tidbits that have nothing to do with golf, but something to do with life and keeping things in perspective. On that note, my grandparents celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Thanksgiving. It was a blessing to witness; not something you get to see too often in a lifetime. They have been shining examples of what it means to be a friend, of service to their community and of service to their Lord. I am grateful I got the opportunity to let them know that I felt that way. The beginning of the year always seems to be an appropriate time to take a look at our lives and scout out where we need to make improvements or reprioritize our time. My problem is in making the changes last more than a couple minutes. Don't be too proud to ask for help, and all the best to everyone in the year ahead. See y'all in Dallas! 