

Inside the Ropes



NBC technicians check out radios to Central Florida spotters at Bay Hill. Photo by Joel Jackson.



By being inside the ropes I got a close-up of Arnold Palmer (right center) as he shared a moment with Chad and Amy Campbell before the official presentation. Photo by Joel Jackson.

By Joel Jackson chapter for turf research.

Every March, the PGA Tour makes its swing through Florida from Miami to Jacksonville with stops in Palm Beach and Orlando in between. Over the years, FGCSA's local chapters have made connections with NBC Sports and helped to provide spotters and scorers to assist in the televising of the four golf tournaments. We each earn about \$40 per day for our effort and that money goes to our

Tour caddies who don't have a bag to tote that particular week are also recruited to provide yardages with leader groups and club selections on par-3 tees, but the TV producers also want eyes and ears with each group to keep track of shots, the order of play and up-to-date score reporting. The networks want people who are golf savvy and observant. That's where the local superintendent chapters come in.

The TV production people who decide how to present the tournament must make split-second decisions on which camera on which hole to use to tell the story. While these folks hunker down in high-tech trailers watching a dozen monitors, there are two to three dozen spotters and scorers walking the fairways and on call to provide the current status of a player. These spotters and scorers enable the director to show the next action shot having the most impact on the tournament.

It is organized chaos and not for the thin skinned as the pressure builds in the cooker.

Members of the South Florida, Palm Beach, Central Florida and North Florida chapters generally serve on the Scoring Line and the Who's Away Line.

The Scoring Line is slightly more organized since the primary job is to call in the cumulative scores of the players after they complete a hole. The players have a group number, say No. 37. The order the players appear on the Pairings Sheet for that day is the order the scores are given all

day. Brevity is critical, so no names are used.

Using the Bay Hill Invitational as an example, Group 37 was Stuart Appleby and Chad Campbell in that order since Appleby was the leader at the first tee. If Appleby was minus 16 and Campbell minus 12 when they started, and they both birdied the first hole, the scorer would say, "Group 37 reporting." The producer responds, "Go ahead." The scorer reports, "Through number 1: minus 17, minus 13." No names are used after each hole. The producer may call and verify scores if they change dramatically.

The Who's Away Line can be a little more frenetic as the director bounces around looking for that interesting shot, usually by the top five or six players in contention. Spotters are usually assigned to the top 12 groups.

If your group isn't scoring well, you don't get too many calls. It can make for a quiet day, but you must pay attention and always be ready to respond to questions like, "Who's away on 15 and what's he

putting for?" or "How many putts left on No. 9?" Your group may be holding up John Daly and they want to know when to switch back to Big John.

While we are sometimes chastised for adding too much commentary to a shot or situation, they always want to know when a player hits a shot into trouble that will likely cost him a shot and alter the chase for the lead. So you have to be on top of any penalties and drops that occur.

Gallery watching can be tempting sometimes, but when you're wearing that radio headset you're on the clock and responsible for helping to put on a good show. I mentioned earlier about not being thin-skinned while doing this gig. The director watching all the monitors and trying to show the next best shot will shout out questions and half the times not listen to the answers as someone else is feeding

him information, so he impatiently repeats the question two or three times, and you get frustrated that they aren't listening to your stellar sports reporting. It's not personal; it's just business. It's also exercise. I averaged 6.8 miles a day according to my digital pedometer.

I fudged a little on the rules. I did take my camera with me, but I kept it in my fanny pack which also housed bottled water and snacks to fortify me during the daily treks. Since my group finished just ahead of winner Chad Campbell, I hung around the 18th green and snapped a shot of Arnold Palmer congratulating Chad just before the formal ceremony.

I heartily recommend FGCSA members to put in their bid at their chapters to help out during these telecasts. It's fun, educational and helps to raise research funds. Not a bad way to participate in your association.

The Importance and Value of Networking and Participation

By Bruce Williams, CGCS.

(Editors Note: The following president's message and article shared by former GCSAA President Bruce Williams are testimony to the advantages and benefits of being active in your local chapter.)

I received a call from a former employee a few weeks ago. I had not heard from him in over 20 years. He had relocated to Ohio and had been a golf course superintendent for 15 years at a nice private country club. Unfortunately, he was told that he was fired and did not know where to turn. That is why he called me with hopes that I could help him find a job.

I asked this fellow a few questions and it went something like this. "Are you a member of your local

chapter?" He said "No." "Are you a member of GCSAA and are you familiar with the Employment Referral Service?" He said "No". "Do you utilize the USGA and their agronomists?" He said "No". "How about your local university....do you have any contacts there?" He said "No."



Bruce Williams, CGCS, MG

This poor fellow was a hard-working guy who kept to himself and never developed a network of people who could help him. While I was happy to hear from him after all those years. I really was not in a position to help him. He had painted himself into a corner. While this is an extreme case, I know that there are a number of our

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