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The FLORIDA Green

SPRING 2021



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Mask Weary and Zoomed Out, Let's Go and Play Some Golf

Finally, it's nice to see some light on the horizon, some signs of a slow return to some kind of normal. As vaccinations increase, we're all hoping for a decrease in any and all other news on COVID-19. I'm especially looking forward to not needing to drag a mask along with me everywhere I go.

We are blessed to be in an industry that has, by and large, thrived during the pandemic. While life outside our little worlds has been completely upended, the day-to-day work of maintaining golf courses has remained pretty normal and safe.

Zoom meetings, and the like, have been huge in helping us communicate over the past year. However, I feel like I am about Zoomed out and doubt I am the only one. I never would have pegged myself as a social person, but I am ready to get back to face-to-face superintendent meetings. And it's not just because they're fun.

There are many other benefits that come from putting a bunch of superintendents together. You never know who you're going to bump into or what valuable tip or insight they might have, or what help you might be able to offer them.

Over the years, I think I've learned as much, if not more, from off-the-cuff exchanges with superintendents as I have from formal presentations. And that's not to diminish seminar-style education, just to illustrate how valuable peer interactions are.

I'm sure we've all tried to fill the void by reaching out regularly to our closest professional friends. But, generally, that ends up as a one-to-one exchange and is limited by that fact. Group conversations, however, can get the ball rolling in all kinds of beneficial directions.

As more and more local chapters are finding ways to resume events and gatherings, we are optimistic that we will be able to do so on a larger scale with the 25th annual Florida GCSA Steven Wright Memorial Golf Tournament and Scramble this summer. Thanks to host superintendent John Reilly, we are scheduled for two great days at The Resort at Longboard Key Club on July 29 and 30.

There could be no better namesake for this event in this time than the late Steve Wright, CGCS. Steve was a passionate advocate of superintendents playing golf. It was a quality-of-life thing as far as Steve was concerned. He was a master at building his professional and personal networks through the game. And most importantly, he always had fun doing it.

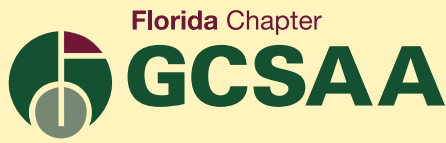
I, for one, am more than ready to take a leaf out of Steve's book and make the most of this event, which also includes education and an outdoor reception on the first day. Longboat Key Resort is a wonderful venue to bring the family along, get together with some old friends, meet some new ones and relax.

Then on the Friday morning, hopefully beating any bad weather, we'll tee it up and enjoy a few hours in the company of our peers. And we'll all be better for it, no offense to Zoom! ■

- Andy Neiswender, Belleair Country Club



Andy Neiswender



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BMP Certification Never Easier Thanks to New Online Program

As the saying goes, “There is no time like the present.” The adage could not be any truer in the current climate when it comes to Golf Best Management Practices (BMP) certification. Last fall, the University of Florida took over administration of the Florida Golf Course BMP Certification Program from the Florida GCSA. In doing so, the certification program became a more accessible virtual option.

Here are three reasons for golf course superintendents to get certified right now:

1. To preserve Florida's precious waterways and landscapes, BMPs are tools that successful superintendents use every day to maintain quality playing surfaces while protecting the environment.
2. Having all of Florida's golf course superintendents BMP certified will further demonstrate our industry's environmental stewardship to local and state municipalities as they make decisions affecting the landscape and those who work it.
3. The BMP certification program is now online, so getting certified has never been more convenient. No more waiting weeks, or months, and facing long round trips to take the exam.

Once you are certified, that designation is valid for four years. That's a long-term return for a short-term investment.

The certification program comprises four sections. Completing those sections demonstrates that you have mastered training in the following areas:

Environmental Concepts
Environmental Monitoring
Design and Construction
Irrigation
Nutrition and Fertilization
Cultural Practices
Lake and Aquatic Plant Management
Turfgrass Pest Management
Pesticide Management
Maintenance Operations

Individual superintendent certification is one half of the BMP picture that our profession and industry need to put together. The other is adopting BMPs for individual golf courses, and your association, in collaboration with GCSAA, and others has been busy making that convenient as well.

As you know, we already have our own state golf BMP manual, Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Environmental Quality on Florida Golf Courses. Starting in 2007, this document was developed by the University of Florida, along with members of the Florida GCSA, USGA, Florida DEP and FDACS. Those same groups, led by UF, worked tirelessly over the past year to update the Golf BMP manual. The newly updated manual rolled out in March, featuring the latest science and practices, and more specific categories in an easy-to-use graphically pleasing digital document.

In March, more than 40 people participated in a virtual BMP facility adoption workshop, hosted by GCSAA. In the two-hour workshop, Mark Johnson, from GCSAA, explained why BMPs are important and showed how

easy it is to use GCSAA's online tool to customize a BMP plan for your facility. Ralph Dain, also from GCSAA, discussed application of the BMPs from a state perspective. UF's Dr. Bryan Unruh then walked through the specifics of adapting the Florida guide to work for your facility.

This event was recorded and is available at www.floridagcsa.com.

We also plan another workshop in Sarasota the day before this year's Steven Wright Florida GCSA Memorial Tournament and Scramble at The Resort at Longboat Key in the last week of July. Hopefully, by then, a host of newly BMP certified superintendents will be ready to take the next step and write their own facility specific BMPs. The two-hour workshop makes that step surprisingly easy.

Much of our recent success on state and local legislative issues has its roots in the Golf BMPs. The BMPs give golf great credibility when engaging lawmakers and regulators. When The Waterways Act passed last year, it officially recognized our industry's BMP program as an example of our sound stewardship.

That is just one example. At an industry level, we have taken many proactive measures to demonstrate the level of responsibility and care that superintendents exercise in relation to the environment. We have worked tirelessly to communicate those efforts to both state and local legislative bodies. But now, we need for all our members to become certified and underline that commitment in an official capacity.

Every single superintendent in the State of Florida should make it their goal to be certified. You are already doing the right things on your golf course. Certification in the BMP program will help ensure that you, and your industry, get the credit for that.

County and city fertilizer ordinances will continue to evolve across the state and the golf BMPs will be our backbone in demonstrating our commitment to the environment. Please don't wait until those debates come to you before equipping yourself.

So, please get busy. There is no time like the present. ■

- Jennifer Bryan, Executive Director

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WEST COAST



Florida West Coast GCSA board members during the strategic planning session with GCSAA's Steve Randall at the head of the table at Belleair Country Club.

The Florida West Coast GCSA extends a warm welcome to new members Blake McKinney and Zach Christian at Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club and Christian Walter with Baroness. There has been quite a lot of movement in our region lately. Thanks to Tony Taylor, CGCS of Noble Turf, for helping us keep track by putting together the following list of comings and goings at various facilities:

Golf Course	Former Superintendent	Current Superintendent
Avila Golf	Mike Slack	Andrew Collier
Bayou/Bardmoor	Michael Cauley	Mike Farissier
Chi Chi Rodriguez	Eric Dixon	Michael Cauley
Dunedin Country Club	Alan Brissenden	James Kelly
Fox Hollow	Terry Teats (retired)	James Gillett
Innisbrook	Rob Koehler	Ryan Stewart
Landsbrook	Mike Farissier	Bruce Tucker
Summerfield Crossings	Keith Lamb	Co- Donald Swartz Co- Alan Hannis
Tarpon Woods		Tim Canfield
The Landings	Coby Shepard	Acting: Nick Huston
The Oaks	Nick Kearns	Gregory Jack

We're confident that good times are ahead for our chapter after a productive strategic planning session at Belleair Country Club on February 16. Steve Randall and Ralph Dain from GCSAA were invited to meet with our board of directors. We set out to establish several strategic goals for the chapter as well as achieve a better understanding of each other and how the group would best function as a board.

Thanks to the following attendees: Cory Agar, Tony Taylor, CGCS, Eli Rahz, Michael Cauley, Todd Six, Bill Cash, Gary Cotton, Andy Neiswender, Eric Dixon, Chris Senior via Zoom, Mike Strube via Zoom, Jennifer Bryan via Zoom. Special thanks to those folks who participated by Zoom. They have my sympathy too, because they missed out on a fantastic lunch provided by our host and Florida GCSA president Andy Neiswender and Belleair Country Club.

At press time, we were looking forward to a fishing trip early April. It was going to be a great change of pace with plenty of fresh air aboard the Super Queen thanks to our host, Queen Fleet. We planned to hold a short meeting on the way out to the fishing grounds and Howard Fertilizer was sponsoring lunch.

Hope everyone has a great spring season.

- Todd Six, On Top of the World Clearwater

SOUTH FLORIDA

The South Florida GCSA has been relatively quiet but at press time we were looking forward to a couple of events. First, was to be our Masters watch party at The Bridges at Springtree Golf Club, thanks to host Tom McGuire. We had golf planned followed by a cookout.

The following week was to be the 32nd annual South Florida Exposition. All funds raised during the Expo support research programs at the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center and also help with representation in local and state legislation. Because of the pandemic, this event was to be virtual.

- Kenton Gamache, The Club at Boca Pointe

SEVEN RIVERS

Seven Rivers GCSA had another successful event over at SkyView Golf & Country Club back in January. Over 60 players enjoyed the wonderful conditions that host superintendent David Hoggard and his staff provided on a truly beautiful day weather-wise. It was very nice to see the great turnout for this time of the year and to listen to some wonderful experiences relating to COVID-19 over the past several months from both the superintendent and vendor sides.

At press time our next scheduled event was the Jeff Hayden Memorial Envirotron Golf Classic for Turfgrass Research at World Woods Golf Club. As the largest turfgrass research fundraiser in the state of Florida, this event has raised over \$1.25 million in the 27 years the event has been held. Proceeds from this event have gone on to provide money for research projects, funding of multiple research positions, equipment and assisting in the lobbying efforts through The Southern Group in Tallahassee. We were expecting another sold-out crowd and looking forward to a great time.

On another note, our friend Jack Creveling and staff were hosts to the LPGA Drive On Championship at Golden Ocala Golf & Equestrian Club back in early March. After a brief hiatus from hosting an LPGA event, Jack and his team came back stronger than ever for this event and the course was in immaculate condition the entire week. This event had a huge economic impact on the area and was spotlighted worldwide via television. We are very

fortunate to be returning there on May 17 and expect the same perfect conditions Jack and team strive for every day. More information to come on that event as we get nearer.

- Andy Jorgensen, CGCS On Top of the World

TREASURE COAST



Congratulations to Skins and Fins winners from Greenway - Jay Pacholczak, Bobby Wallace, Jon Mahannah, Craig Mare, Jon Mason and Jason Schoonover.

Like everyone else, the Treasure Coast GCSA had plans disrupted by the pandemic, with postponements, cancelations and, in the case of the Blue Pearl, improvisations. Thanks to Chris Tompa and the Florida Club, for saving the year for our chapter by hosting the Skins and Fins golf portion of the Blue Pearl under fantastic conditions.

Congratulations to Skins and Fins winners on team Greenway - Jay Pacholczak, Bobby Wallace, Jon Mahannah, Craig Mare, Jon Mason and Jason Schoonover. Team Harrell's won the golf event thanks to great playing by Nick Cole, Alan Lichter, Jeff Powell and Shane Willey.

With the 2020 Masters also rescheduled, we enjoyed a mini putt and Masters watch party in the fall. Mini putt champions were Duane Cyr and Chris Tompa with the Masters pool winner being John Swaner.



A glimpse inside the Treasure Coast GCSA strategic planning session.



There was plenty of fun had at the Treasure Coast GCSA Masters watch party.

With The Masters returning to its traditional time slot early April, at press time we were getting ready for another Masters watch party and mini putt championship. This was to be a 36-hole two-person best ball event at Pop Stroke in Port St. Lucie.

The Blue Pearl is also back on schedule this year, set for May 10 at Vero Beach Country Club. Hope to see everyone there.

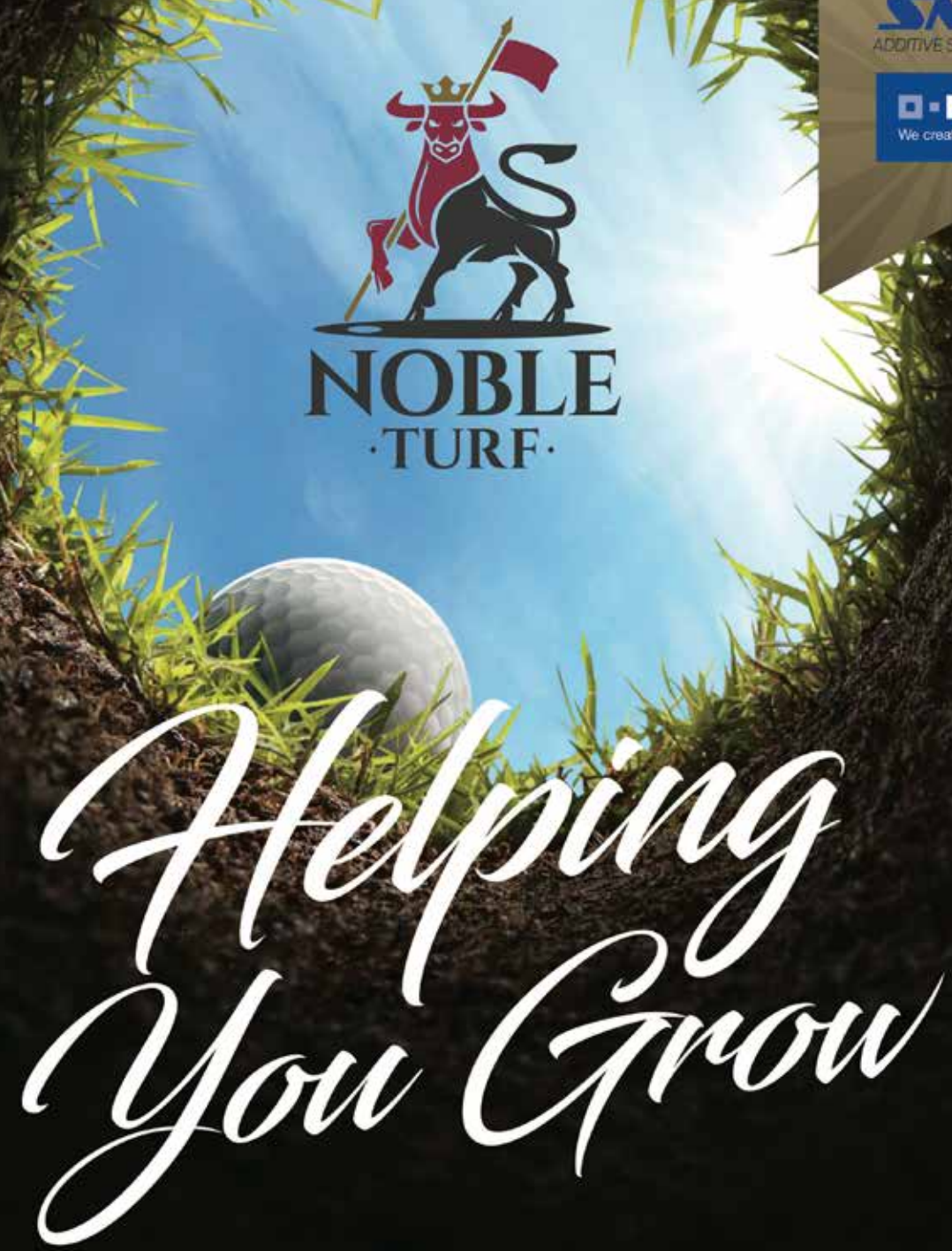
We also want thank Steve Randall and Ralph Dain from GCSAA, with help from Jennifer Bryan of the Florida GCSA for facilitating a great strategic planning session for our board in January. Great

ideas and great discussion on how to better serve our members.

- Scott MacPhee, Sailfish Point Golf Club

NORTH FLORIDA

The North Florida GCSA has been low key since our Christmas Tournament in December, however we did manage to have our Glen Klauk Research Tournament this year with a packed course. We even had a waiting list for this tournament. Billy Griffith won low net with a 68 and Steve Sorrel got low gross with a 71. All proceeds from this Tournament will be donated to Florida GCSA research fund.



Tony Taylor

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We'd like to thank all that participated and especially our sponsors:

Lunch - Wesco Turf; beverages - Target Specialty; general - FMC, FIS Outdoor, Bulloch Fertilizer, Beard Equipment, Pike Creek Turf, MacCurrach Golf Construction, Howard Fertilizer.

Our attention then turned to our 28th Memorial Scholarship Tournament on April 5 at Jacksonville Golf and Country Club. This Tournament is very special since it supports the scholarship grants we offer to our members' children who are attending college. Last year, we were unable to have this tournament, but were still able to give grants to seven students. This year we expect more applicants and were hoping for a very successful tournament.

- Betty Hooten

PALM BEACH



George Kervin in action at the Palm Beach GCSA Vendor Appreciation Day.



The greeting golfers get when they arrive at PGA National.



Jeremiah Lockhart and his team had PGA National's Championship Course in superb shape in February.

The Palm Beach GCSA has donated \$2,500 to support the research and advocacy efforts funded by the Environmental Institute for Golf (EIFG), the philanthropic organization of GCSAA. An additional gift of \$2,500 was also provided to support First Green, GCSAA's STEM-education program. With these donations, the chapter renews its Platinum Tee Club status within the EIFG's annual giving program. That program recognizes organizations that give \$5,000 or more annually to the EIFG.

The Palm Beach GCSA is also recognized in the Executive Club giving level of the EIFG's cumulative giving program. The Executive Club recognizes donors who have given between \$25,000 and \$49,999 since 1987.

"The association continues to grow thanks to dedicated chapters like the Palm Beach GCSA," says Rhett Evans, GCSAA and EIFG chief executive officer. "Their donation to the EIFG and First Green allows us to continue to support the future of the golf course management industry and the game."

The Palm Beach GCSA was founded in 1978. It is one of 99 GCSAA-affiliated chapters in North America. The Palm Beach GCSA is delighted to provide funding to the EIFG and First Green. The donation brings our mission to life

by helping support the profession when students attending First Green events learn about golf course management and environmental stewardship. Environmental protection is supported through new research and education when the EIFG continues to receive the resources necessary.

The Palm Beach GCSA is off to a great start in 2021 and we remain optimistic as we head into the coming months. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our members for continuing to support our chapter events. I believe the future of the game has been strengthened for years to come through these difficult times. We are pressing forward with our mission to create value to members by providing education and fellowship while promoting the game of golf.

We hosted our annual Class A, B, C golf-only event at the PGA National Championship Course in early February. Many thanks to Jeremiah Lockhart and his talented team for their excellent hospitality and first-class playing conditions. It was a privilege to get a taste of the Championship Course just weeks ahead of this year's Honda Classic. The course was in excellent condition as always, and we are thankful for PGA National's continued support of the Palm Beach GCSA.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

The golf format was a two-person, net best ball. Congratulations to our winners:

1 - Ed Smith, Justin Gille, 70; 2 - Clinton Tingen, Scott MacPhee, 71*; 3 - Stuart Bothe, Matthew Lean, 71; 4 - Jose Perez, Ryan King, 72. *Scorecard playoff.

Most recently, the board of directors organized a Vendor Appreciation Day at Drive Shack in West Palm Beach. It was a great event and a nice opportunity to give thanks to the many affiliates who support our chapter each year. Thank you to those who attended and enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship and fun.

We have some exciting events coming up on the calendar. At press time, we were looking forward to our Class B and C member golf event on March 25 at Wellington National Golf Club. A special thanks to superintendent Jeff Smolen and his team for hosting the event. The education was to follow virtually on March 30. We were excited to have Ralph Dain and Jeffrey Klontz Jr. highlighting GCSAA's assistant superintendent certificate series. Darren Davis, CGCS was to present on professionalism, self-promotion, setting yourself apart and advancing through the industry. Thank you all for giving your time to make this a fantastic education opportunity for our Class B and C members.

I am excited to announce that we have a tentative date of June 4 and 5 set for the 20th Annual Steve Wright Classic Fishing Tournament out of Blowing Rocks Marina. More details to come once we are confirmed.

Last and certainly not least, we are thrilled to return to The Falls Club of the Palm Beaches for the 41st Annual Future of Golf Tournament on June 19. A special thank you to Steve Pearson, CGCS for hosting us once again. Stay tuned for details and registration information.

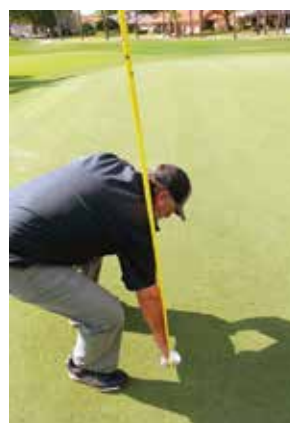
We hope that you and your families are well. Please reach out to me or one of our board members should you have any questions or concerns.

- Ryan Swilley, Gulf Stream Golf Club

CENTRAL FLORIDA



Scott Mosher's ball sits at the bottom of the cup after his hole-in-one.



Out it comes.



Here's to a hole-in-one. Brothers and cart buddies Mark Mosher, left, and Scott Mosher toast Scott's ace.



Rob Torri and his team presented outstanding conditions at Orange Tree Golf Club.

Our Memorial Tournament at Orange Tree Golf Club on March 8 was a bitter-sweet affair. It was wonderful to get together for our first event of the year with a great turnout of 22 teams. But it was also sad coming soon after the passing of Sean Duffy, from Isleworth Golf and Country Club, on February 16. Our sympathies go to his family and Rob Torri, our host superintendent at Orange Tree, gave a nice eulogy for Sean, who was widely respected and liked by his peers.

Thanks to Rob, his assistants, Chris and Jim Purcell, and their team for presenting great playing conditions. The highlight of the day was a hole-in-one by Scott Mosher, of BWI, on the par 3 7th hole. Scott's name was also

drawn as the split-the-pot winner, so he had a day he won't forget in a hurry.

We welcome new affiliate supporters, at the Platinum level - Sunstate Equipment Company, Corey Wert, and A Budget Tree Service, Mike Varn; at the Silver level - Aquatrols, Duncan Stewart Orris; and sole proprietorship, Ingenium Power and Sport, Jeff Short.

Our next event is our Chapter Championship at Dubsdread Golf Course in May with our annual meeting following in June at the Country Club of Winter Haven.

- Lisa McDowell

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SUNCOAST



Jeff Strother, Old "Santa" Tom and Frank O'Rourke at the Suncoast GCSA Christmas party.



Nick Kearns, Sean Shoffit, Jeremy Nipper, Johnny Gault at the clay shoot.



Individual shoot winner Calusa GCSA member, Eric Ruha, with Calusa GCSA board member, John Vuknic, CGCS.



Suncoast GCSA members Mike Miles, who finished third, and Preston Stephenson.

CHAPTER ROUND UP



Bill Tyde, Jeff Strother, Preston Stephenson, Dan Haubein, Old "Santa" Tom, John VanVranken and Nick Kearns at the Suncoast GCSA Christmas party

The Suncoast GCSA report is the tale of three normals: the new normal, the newest normal, and the let's get back to normal. In the new normal section, in December the chapter had the night golf tournament at Robby Robertson's Hawks Run for the benevolent fund and we returned to our normal haunt, the beautiful Gasparilla Inn, with a decidedly smaller crowd.

The end result was a spectacular event and great Christmas spirit where we raised a nice sum for Operation Second Chance. Thanks to all our members and sponsors for their generosity, especially Lee Crosby and Harrell's for matching the donation. Operation Second Chance is a wonderful organization that serves wounded, injured and ill Veterans by building relationships and identifying and supporting their immediate needs and interests.

Host Jeff Strother and team knocked it out of the park as usual on the course and the southern style beach side dinner. Even the ghost of Old "Santa" Tom showed up for the nightly festivities.

The newest normal: in mid-March we squared off in a rifle fight and clay shoot competition with our neighbors from the Calusa chapter at Sarasota Gun Club in Nokomis. Fun was had by all and

everyone returned to work with all their fingers and toes.

The two chapters competed against each other on the sporting clay course with 50 total clays being a perfect score for each shooter. When all was said and done the scores were tied and the winner was decided by a coin flip between Preston Stephenson representing Suncoast and John Vuknic representing Calusa. John made the right call, and the Calusa went home victorious.

Top individual shooter prizes were awarded to Eric Ruha, Calusa, 48 out of 50; Ryan Dillinger, 46 out of 50; Mike Miles, 42 out of 50. Thanks to Everglades Equipment Group, board member Sean Shoffit and Jim Leiseburg for their sponsorship.

In the let's get back to normal section, the Suncoast chapter can confirm the Suncoast Scramble will be at our favorite spot, Sara Bay Country Club, where Carlyle Merring will host us on this Donald Ross gem. That event is in late August, just in time to kick off renewals of yearly memberships and vendor sponsorships. The winning team will take ownership of the John Foy trophy, a coveted jewel in any trophy case.

- John Reilly, The Resort at Longboat Key Club

Danny Aylwin: Cherished FRIEND, MENTOR, COLLEAGUE

As a PGA Tour rules official for decades, Slugger White is on first name terms with the best golfers in the world, but he'd give anything to play one more round with a guy most of them never even heard of. White is one of many still mourning the loss of Danny Aylwin, who died January 31, two days after suffering a stroke. Aylwin was a fixture in the Volusia County golf world for most of the 50 years he spent taking care of golf courses.

That's about as long as he and White were close friends. In the very early '70s, they cut their teeth in the golf business at what was then New Smyrna Beach Municipal Golf Course, with Aylwin on a mower and White, recently arrived from West Virginia, giving lessons on the range.

"Danny was just such a great guy. He loved his job, and he was absolutely one of the best at it," says White, who has seen some quality golf course conditioning in his time. "I cherished his friendship, absolutely cherished his friendship. It's gut-wrenching to think he's gone. I think about the man every single day. I really miss him."

White is far from alone in his sentiment.



Danny Aylwin and wife, Kathy, upon receiving the Keeper of the Green Award from the North Florida GCSA in 2014.

"I still find myself reaching for the phone to call Danny to ask him a question or tell him what's going on. We talked four or five times a week easily," Scott Fabulich, who first met Aylwin in the late '80s, working for Aylwin's brother, Mike, at Tomoka Oaks Country Club in Ormond Beach. When Mike stepped away after

nearly two decades in the profession, Fabulich took over.

"That's when we really became close friends," he says. "I was constantly asking him what to do and how to do things." Others did too. As White says, "Guys in the area would call him if they had a problem, asking for his advice and to see what he thought. He was well renowned because he was damn good at what he did."

Of course, Aylwin's day-to-day agronomic expertise was only part of his legacy as a superintendent. While he was a Lake City Community College graduate, he never thought less of anyone without a turf degree and constantly promoted from within.

"You know those NFL coaching trees where one coach, like a Bill Walsh or Bill Belichick, trains all these other guys who later become head coaches themselves, well that was Danny," says Mike Aylwin. "I was part of that. Fabulich was an assistant general manager for a start. Rick Herman (Grand Reserve Golf Club) was a mechanic. John Clifton was a kid on his crew who he moved up to assistant and then he took over at Oceanside when Danny retired."

Tim Hiers, CGCS sits on another branch of the Aylwin tree. One of the most decorated superintendents in the profession, Hiers, now at White Oak in Yulee, aspired to become a professional golfer when he took a job with Aylwin at New Smyrna in 1970. Hiers was on the golf team at Daytona Beach Community College with Mike Aylwin at the time.

By his second year of college, Hiers realized any career he might have in golf wouldn't be with a club in his hands. It was Aylwin, he says, who encouraged him to try Lake City, setting him squarely on a path to success.

"The biggest thing he taught me, other than a great work ethic that he modeled, was learning how to prioritize things," Hiers says. "Another thing he modeled was patience. He always patient with me, good with me. Those things have really helped me in my career. And he did a lot with a little. He knew how to stretch a dollar. I guess I learned that from him too."

Hiers likens Aylwin's career to that of former PGA Tour player Tom Kite, who was successful and always near the top of the leaderboard without making spectacular headlines. "Danny was one of those guys, who was quiet, kept his head down, and did great things over a long period of time," Hiers says. "Just like Tom Kite, he was steady and good."

Aylwin spent almost a decade at New Smyrna Beach before moving west to Sugar Mill Woods Country Club in Homosassa. There for four years, he frequently tapped into the wisdom of legendary University of Florida extension specialist Dr. G.C. Horn. Previously, he'd often been in the ear of Lloyd Clifton, the former superintendent, turned consultant, turned golf course architect, who was himself an icon in Central Florida.

"Danny was like a sponge," says brother Mike. It was Clifton who lured Aylwin back to the east coast, to build Plantation Bay Golf and Country Club in Ormond Beach. He was there for eight



Colleagues and comrades from the time they were at Lake City Community College together, Jimmy Ellison, Danny Aylwin, Ron Hill and Freddie Kleinfelder, in 2014.

years before switching to nearby Oceanside Country Club in 1994. In a dramatic case of the storm before the calm, Tropical Storm Gordon dumped 14 inches of rain at Oceanside on Aylwin's first day on the job. But he kept turning up for the next 26 years, until he retired last July.

To mark that occasion, friends staged a surprise tournament at Riviera Country Club, just across the Halifax River from Oceanside, where Aylwin had become a member. "There were probably 50 guys who showed up and he didn't have a clue," Hiers chuckles. "I got to play with him and, of course, did not know it would be the last round I'd ever play with him."

And Aylwin could play, winning a number of amateur tournaments in the region over the years and qualifying for the now-defunct U.S. Public Links Championship in 1977. He maintained his passion for playing all along. Most Sundays at 7.30am, he would tee off with Fabulich, Rick Herman and, when he was in town, Slugger White. Aylwin and White also had a regular 7.30am tee-time for nine holes on Thursdays.

At superintendent gatherings, he was often in the company of other excellent players and good friends Ron Hill, Jimmy Ellison and Fred Kleinfelder, all of whom he met at Lake City and all of whom are now gone.

Aylwin's passing made headlines in the Daytona Beach News-Journal. The newspaper described the loss of this "popular figure" as "a sudden, shocking and cruel blow to his many colleagues and friends."

"I tell you what, Danny was a little crusty on the outside. If you didn't know the guy, you wouldn't quite know what to think or how to approach him," Fabulich says. "But I'll tell you what, once you got through to him and he trusted you and he liked you, he was one of the most loyal people you could meet and would do anything to help you out in any way possible."

"He pulled no punches. He was one of the most straightforward, honest guys I ever met. Had a very strong work ethic, had a good time with his friends, loved to be around his friends, and was just really, really good for the golf course community."



Some of Danny Aylwin's best friends at a tournament at New Smyrna Beach Golf Club, dedicated to his memory; back row, Johnny Thompson, Barney Thompson, Rick Herman, Marvin Powers, Scott Fabulich and Bob Gruber; front row, Tom Cowan, John Clifton, George Clifton and Darren Bache.

Accordingly, the North Florida GCSA honored Aylwin's lifetime contribution with the Keeper of the Green Award in 2014.

Aylwin was with some of his good friends over a laugh and a beer just hours before his stroke. The gathering was to celebrate the 75th birthday of semi-retired superintendent Charlie Schaeffer. It was called by former Target Specialty Products representative, Gary Morgan, at one of Aylwin's favorite haunts, Houligan's on Granada Boulevard. Aylwin and Kathy, his wife of 47 years, were regulars there on Friday nights.

"We were all together having lunch. When we were leaving, I said, 'I'll see you Sunday morning,'" Fabulich says. "Then I got the text that night that something happened. Then, just within a matter of days, it was too much for him to overcome. Still, it was great that we all got to see him that one last time."

Aylwin relished time with his kind. Brother Mike recalls regular "turf talk meetings" at a now-gone "dive bar" known as the White Eagle Lounge on U.S. 1.

"It was quite a camaraderie. They'd get together once or twice a week. Most of Danny's buddies were in the industry, mostly superintendents, but pros too," he says. "His legacy was that helped all the guys. He'd loan equipment, go by and tell them what he saw. He was never overbearing at all. It was just about doing what he could to get someone back on the right path. He loved the guys and they loved him back."

Fabulich was one of those guys, and when he found himself without a golf course after River Bend Golf Club closed at the end of last year, it pleased Aylwin no end that he found his way to Oceanside. John Clifton, who Aylwin nurtured from a crew position to assistant, and then superintendent, hired Fabulich as his assistant. Round the circle even more, Clifton is a grandson of Lloyd Clifton, who did so much for Aylwin early on.

"Danny was a very big mentor in my life, and in teaching me everything about being a superintendent, just as he was for a lot of people around here," Fabulich says. "For me to be out here now on the place that was Danny's for 26 years, it's really cool." ■

- Trent Bouts

Michael Scott Syfrett

The Florida GCSA extends sincere sympathies to the family and friends of Michael Scott Syfrett, who died at age 50 on January 14. A longtime member of the Everglades GCSA and Calusa GCSA, he was a sales representative and territory manager for Southern Ag. since 2001.

Out of high school, Syfrett enlisted in the U.S. Army as an Army Ranger with the 75th Ranger Regiment. After his service, he earned a bachelor's degree in plant and soil science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1995. He moved to Florida to launch a career in agronomy and went on to become an ASA certified professional agronomist and crop advisor specializing in plant pathology and phytopathology.

He was ranked as one of top 25 turf and ornamental representatives in the U.S. by Bayer, Crop Science Division and his reputation as an agronomist led to his selection as an ambassador and agricultural delegate to China in 2010 by the American Society of Agronomy.



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Sean Duffy: A Huge Heart AND ONE OF THE BEST

Friends remember Sean Duffy's "larger than life" personality that could light up a room.

Those close to Sean Duffy remember his ability to connect with people of all stripes. They marvel at a “larger than life” character who could light up a room. A man with a “big personality” and a heart of similar size.

So, when that light dimmed over the last year as people sensed Duffy withdraw, many guessed something was amiss. Sadly, it was. On February 16, at age 52, he died after a long battle with liver disease.

Duffy was director of golf course operations at Isleworth Golf and Country Club in Windermere, one of the premier facilities in the state. He arrived there in the fall of 2012, after two years at The Club at Twin Eagles. Before that he had six years at The Golden Bear Club at Keene's Pointe and five years at Grand Cypress Resort.

For a brief period along the way, he was also a salesman for Jacobsen.

“That’s when our relationship blossomed,” recalls good friend Rob Torri, from Orange Tree Golf Club in Orlando. “He walked into my office one day and when I asked what he was doing, he told me he wanted to sell me a roller. I said, ‘A roller! What the hell are you talking about? You’re like one of the best superintendents around.’”

And, of course, Duffy was, as his subsequent success and tenure at Isleworth attest.

“That’s a very demanding clientele over there,” Torri says, referring to a membership that includes icons of the game and sports in general, as well as titans of industry. “But it didn’t matter if it was touring pros, the owners of Johnson and Johnson, or a guy on the maintenance crew working the bunkers, Sean could communicate with every type of personality.”

Indeed, one message posted in the guestbook with Duffy’s online obituary is from nine-time PGA Tour winner, Stuart Appleby, and his wife, Ashley. Speaking directly to Torri’s point, it reads in part: “Our family loved this man. He was such a dear soul. He will be forever missed. Always a relaxing soul to hang around, connected with your conversation, and always honest. Such a sweetheart to our kids...He was such a treasured friend...there will only be one Duff.”

Duffy’s honesty was legendary.

“You always knew where you stood with him,” laughs Sam Gardner, Duffy’s assistant superintendent, who has taken on the task of filling his shoes at Isleworth. “He laid it out on the table. Honestly, I think that’s why he lasted so long at Isleworth. He wasn’t a ‘yes man.’ He knew how to handle CEOs and owners of companies. He knew how to interact with them.”

Torri relished Duffy’s forthrightness.

“Sean would bust my chops and I would bust his,” he says. “That’s characteristic of the Northeast, I guess. Sean and I had

something in common, along with Tommy Alex, we were all from Connecticut. But Sean busted balls more than anybody I ever met.”

More than once, PGA Tour agronomist Bland Cooper, CGCS witnessed some of what Torri speaks. When Cooper was visiting Bay Hill Club around tournament time, a posse would gather at a small Italian restaurant on Friday afternoon. At one end of the table would be Alex, who hired Duffy out of Lake City Community College at Grand Cypress in 1993. Torri would be there too, and Dwight Kummer, former Bay Hill superintendent now president of Howard Fertilizer and Chemical, among others. Duffy was always at the other end, facing Alex.

“Honestly, it was like having Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy at your table, better than anything you would pay to go see stand-up,” Cooper says of listening “to those two go at it.” “You’d be laughing so hard you couldn’t eat. I’d get a salad and take it with me when I left. It was the best comedy I’ve ever seen live, and I’ve paid to see some funny people.”

Gardner confirms Duffy as “the king of the comeback.” “He’d sit there taking it all in calculating when to deliver the one-liner, the jab, and it always came at the perfect time,” Gardner says.

The guy was one heck of a superintendent too.

“Growing grass was in his blood,” Torri says. “There’s a reason there’s this whole mystique with Isleworth. In this business everybody knows, it’s a very high-end facility and a tough gig. That Sean was there for as long as he was, and would have been for years to come, that right there, says a lot about him.”

Demanding as the job was, Torri says Duffy was always generous when help was needed. Remembering Duffy at a Central Florida GCSA tournament at Orange Tree soon after his passing, Torri told how, over the years, Duffy had served as his “turf consultant, and my shrink.”

“That guy talked me off the ledge more than anybody,” Torri says. “He was just a good friend. The guy had a huge heart. He would drop what he was doing to answer a call and help out. One year, I was having some problems with some greens. It was in the middle of him hosting the Tavistock Cup, and the guy drops what he’s doing, hops in his car, leaves Tavistock, and comes over here to check out what’s going on.”

Duffy’s willingness to help out led him to a “qualification” not everybody is aware of and even those that are, still wonder whether to believe it. But the truth is, Duffy was also an ordained minister. He officiated at Gardner’s wedding in 2015, after a spur of the



The Duffy family, Tyler, 23, Jennifer, Casey, 21 and Sean.

moment entrance to the clergy.

“My wife’s grandfather was supposed to perform the ceremony, but he got sick. Sean said, ‘I can do it.’ It was kind of a joke at first,” Gardner says. “We signed him up online and that afternoon, he was the officiant at our wedding. We paid \$59.99, some church out of Seattle. Just enough to make it legal in the State of Florida. He had this clergy parking pass. It came in the packet they sent us later.”

As a marriage celebrant, Duffy at least got the job done, as a superintendent, Gardner says, “He was one of the best. One of the best. He ran a tight ship. People would ask me, ‘What’s Sean like?’ And I’d tell them, ‘Well, he’s 5ft. 4 and from Connecticut but he carries himself like he’s

7ft. tall and from Texas.”

It seems Duffy took a similar approach to his illness, which Gardner first learned about “two or three years ago.” It took longer for the rest of the golf turf world to catch on and then only in part.

“Sean was a really private person. He and I were pretty close, and there were times when he shared a lot. But it was not my story to tell,” Gardner says. “Sean was not going to ever show pain or emotion and he was here every day. Towards the end, I could see it really taking a toll, and I’d tell him, ‘Go home, get better.’ He would look at me and say, ‘If I stay at home, I’ll go crazy.’ He never let anyone see what he was going through and never put it on anyone else.”

Torri’s first inkling that something might be amiss came during a round of golf with Duffy at Shingle Creek. “He kept grabbing his abdomen area,” Torri recalls. “I said, ‘Duff, you need to go get that checked out.’ And he just said, ‘Yeah, I’m good. I’m good. I got it.’”

Then, last summer, someone called asking if Torri had seen his friend. Torri had not for some time. “They said they’d heard he was in a bad way,” Torri says. When repeated phone calls went unanswered, Torri called Gardner and they agreed he should make a visit. When Torri arrived at Isleworth, he was shocked.

“I walked into his office and couldn’t believe what I saw,” Torri says. “He’d lost a ton of weight, and he just looked ill. You could see it was something serious. How anybody could keep that so close to the hip up until the 11th hour, that’s a different person. But he didn’t want to drag anybody else down. He didn’t want anybody worrying about him. Just a very unselfish individual.”

In the time that was left, Torri made a point of regularly getting

together with his buddy, for lunch or sometimes just to ride the golf course. “I just wanted to be a friend, support him. I asked a lot of questions, but you could tell when it was time to shut it down with Sean,” he says. “I’d try to keep him laughing. We always talked turf. There was always shop talk. And we were still busting chops.”

Many others would have done the same, given the opportunity.

“Sean used to say sometimes that he didn’t have a lot of friends,” Gardner recalls. “But there are a million people who thought the world of him. When the news broke, I had 10 phone calls from 10 different countries all over the world from people reaching out because he had made an impact on them. That’s the type of person he was. Super-intendents in Ireland, interns from Dubai, people from South Africa, Australia. Even guys he’d met at a show and in a 20-minute conversation had made such a profound impact.”

Brandon Richey from Lake Nona Golf and Country Club was among those who wanted to do more had the door been ajar. As Isleworth’s sister course, and co-host of the Tavistock Cup, there was a working relationship and some shared experiences on business trips, including to Ireland where Duffy’s family name proved a constant catalyst for fun with the locals.

“Sean was the life of the party. He lived life large,” Richey says. “It was a really special experience to be able to share that with him.”

For all the “charisma” Torri says Duffy possessed, he “wasn’t a social butterfly.” “He kept a small circle. But when he’d go to a superintendent event around here – and he’d only make a showing every year or two – everybody still knew who he was. That’s just the type of character and person he was.”

As long as they’d known each other, Torri didn’t meet Duffy’s wife until the memorial service.

“For years, I always wondered what type of woman would be married to Sean because Sean was a character. Then I met his wife and it all made sense,” Torri says. “Jennifer is a unique woman, a special woman...and she’d have to be to put up with a guy like Duff.”

Torri also met Duffy’s son Tyler, 23, and daughter Casey, 21. Tyler is in law school and Casey on her way to a master’s degree in teaching. Seeing them and the kind of people they were helped Torri to a level of peace with the loss of his friend. “What a testament to the way they raised those kids,” he says.

Gardner says Duffy was good at raising people in general. “I learned so much from Sean,” he says. “He had more of an impact than anybody other than my father.”



Sean Duffy, right, hams it up for the camera with Brandon Richey during a visit to Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Cooper remembers bringing student volunteers to Isleworth from Bay Hill during the afternoon break in tournament duties. “He would show them the entire operation, around the golf course, through the clubhouse. I remember one year he introduce the kids to Shaq,” Cooper says. “Sean was great with them.”

That Duffy effect worked on Gardner immediately. It was one of three interviews Gardner had that day. The first two were for assistant positions. Duffy was looking for a spray tech but that was the job Gardner accepted.

“Guys I’d worked with before criticized me, wanting to know why I’d take a step backwards since I’d already been an assistant,” Gardner says. “But seeing Sean pull up in a golf cart, covered in dirt, pulling a hose reel behind him, and the way he interacted, I just knew that was the right place for me.”

“I miss him like crazy,” Torri says. “But I’m so glad to have known him, not only as a golf course superintendent but as a person. I learned a lot from him.”

Torri suggests there was even a lesson in the last contact he had with Duffy, who was in hospital by now. “We’d applied our perennial ryegrass this fall and so after our first cut, I took a pic and sent it to Duff and said, ‘I think we may have sent the mowers out too soon.’ His text back to me said, ‘Never too soon, only too late.’ That hit home. That was him knowing his time was up.” ■

- Trent Bouts

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Plenty of Positives Ahead IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

The golf course superintendent profession has plenty to look forward to in a post-pandemic world according to GCSAA's new secretary-treasurer, Kevin Sunderman, CGCS from Isla Del Sol Yacht and Country Club in St. Petersburg. Sunderman, who led the Florida GCSA in 2013-'14, was elected at the national association's annual business meeting as part of the virtual Golf Industry Show in February.

"As disastrous as 2020 could have been for the golf industry, it turned out to be quite the opposite," he says. "GCSAA feels like the association played a pivotal role in keeping golf open for business. And in places where there was a temporary shutdown, in getting it back open."

As it turned out for most of the year, golf wasn't just open, it was wide open. Rounds at the vast majority of facilities across the country soared as golf emerged as one of a limited number of safe recreational activities. The bump shows no sign of leveling out in 2021.

"With the work we did with our allied partners, we provided resources to our members when they needed them the most," Sunderman says. "Through the virtual town halls, electronic communications and all the information on the website, our members and their facilities had constantly updating resources to help guide their decisions. And we saw the whole superintendent network come together on social media sharing ideas."

While most of the current focus is on the rise in rounds played, Sunderman says another positive takeaway has been an elevation in the standing of the golf course superintendent. "I think a lot of decision-makers in and around golf realized pretty quickly who was essential and who was not," he says. "It was clear, very quickly, that the superintendent and the golf course maintenance team, as a whole, were the people you did need."



Kevin Sunderman, CGCS

Sunderman adds that much of what GCSAA, and indeed golf, was able to achieve in the face of the pandemic had roots stretching far back. Governmental affairs work and initiatives like the Grassroots Ambassador program had shaped access and trust with regulators and lawmakers that proved critical in the early stages of the pandemic.

"Relationships built over the past 20 years have really made inroads for us," Sunderman says. "We were doing advocacy before we realized exactly what it was that we needed. But we identified where things were headed and said, 'Let's get there first.'"



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Sunderman anticipates a similar return on investment from GCSAA's best management practices campaign.

"Reaching the goal last year of having all 50 states with formal, adopted BMPs was a huge milestone," he says. "We continue to spread that word amongst the industry but more importantly amongst the regulators. The next step, the really significant step, is now pushing toward every facility taking those state BMPs and tailoring them to meet their specific facility needs."

That step will further substantiate the case that GCSAA makes to lawmakers and others that golf and superintendents are responsible environmental citizens. Sunderman says it will also give superintendents something to take to owners and members that shows all the steps they see play out on the golf course are sourced in a sound environmental plan.

"That can further strengthen our members' positions at their facilities," he says. "These BMPs and getting facilities to adopt them, will be significant. It may not gain a lot of for us in terms of generating new resources of any kind, but it may save a whole heck of a lot for us when it comes to resources potentially being taken away."

Sunderman says The First Green program is another investment likely to pay long-term dividends. The hands-on field trips not only introduce the next generation to potential careers in the

industry, but they simultaneously serve to educate parents, many of whom are non-golfers, perhaps with a less than positive view of the industry.

"We really see this as a potential game changer for the game of golf and what we do as a profession," Sunderman says. "It is bridging the gap between golf and the non-golfing community. The kids get so much out of it because it is such a fun and engaging way for them to learn. They can see the science and the math have real-world application. And the parents are getting it too because they are seeing what we do to protect water quality, encourage wildlife and so on."

Sunderman also praised the efforts of GCSAA leadership and staff in staging GIS as a virtual event in 2021. "You can only imagine what it took to take what is involved in the whole GIS and put it on a virtual platform. I am very proud of what we were able to achieve," he says.

"We are not looking to replace a physical show with a virtual show, because the value of the GIS is bringing everybody together and sharing ideas, networking, building relationships. It's hard to do that online. But we had so much positive feedback that everybody was just grateful for the opportunity to have that unified presence. It still kept the community together." ■

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Florida's Auction Donations RANK FIFTH ONE MONTH OUT

A month before this year's Rounds 4 Research auction was set to open on April 26, Florida ranked fifth nationally in the number of rounds donated per state. Of a total of 574 items donated to that point, Florida had put forward 49, with an estimated retail value just shy of \$20,000. That put the state, fifth behind South Carolina (74), Tennessee (63), Georgia (58) and North Carolina (50).

"On behalf of the Florida GCSA Rounds 4 Research task group, I would like to thank those participating clubs who have made donations thus far," says task group chair, Parker Ferren, CGCS from St. Andrews Club in Boynton Beach. "Your contributions are vital to our ongoing commitment to turfgrass research in Florida. Donations can be made now until the end of the auction on May 2."

Ferren stressed that facilities could make monetary donations if club policies during the pandemic prevented non-member play. "Ideally, every facility in the state would donate a four-some which would attract more bids from more golfers," Ferren says. "But we understand that is not always ideal for the clubs themselves. So, we appreciate it when they still find a way to lend support to this effort, which ultimately benefits every facility in the state."

To donate a round or make a monetary donation, please visit www.eifg.org. "The process only takes a few minutes and be done completely online," Ferren says. "Once the auction is underway, please encourage golfers at your respective facilities to participate as there are some great deals up for bid."

Ferren also encouraged Florida GCSA members to make use of promotional materials provided by GCSAA, which can be found at www.rounds4research.com. "It would be helpful if your pro shop would be willing to display some of these promotional



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materials to encourage golfer participation," he says.

If you have any questions about the program, or would like additional information, please contact Florida GCSA executive director Jennifer Bryan at fgcsa@comcast.net or at (800) 732-6053. ■

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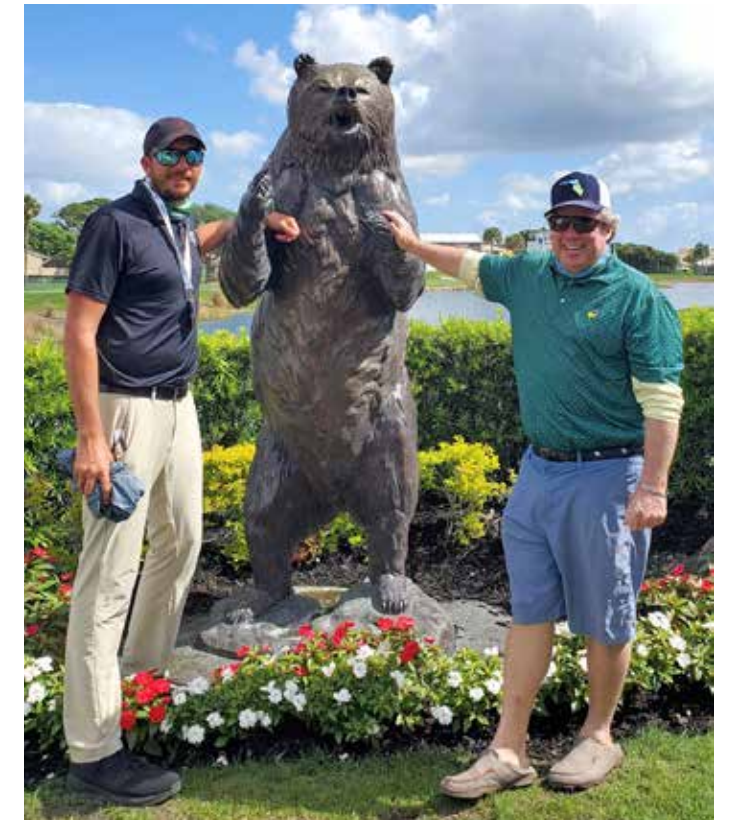
by John Reilly

In February, alongside the golf course maintenance management team from Longboat Key Club, I had the wonderful opportunity to volunteer for the entire week at The Concession for the WGC-Workday Championship. It was an awesome team building exercise for us. The week after that, I spent Thursday with my great friend Robb Dillinger, a retired CGCS, at Bay Hill; where we saw no fewer than double digit industry folk taking in the King's palace.

The next week, the Tour stop was at probably the finest maintained venue on the planet: TPC Sawgrass. After that, I visited Jeremiah Lockhart and his team at PGA National. Toured for the day what has always been an ultimate test for the best players in the world, but mostly I listened to some great history of the event.

All this got me slightly contemplative about our game, our industry and our great state. My origins and my turf education are from the Northeast, bentgrass and poa country to be specific. I remember it like it was yesterday; giving my final presentation at Rutgers on ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars from my internship with Darren Davis, CGCS at Olde Florida to a cacophony of grunts, fake coughs, middle fingers, pencils in the nose, and scoffs that bermudagrass was "just a weed you can't kill."

Fast forward to all the professional golf during those weeks of the Florida Swing and I find it an interesting juxtaposition



PGA National's director of agronomy, Jeremiah Lockhart, and John Reilly at the beginning of the Bear Trap.

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against the perception now, of Florida and its superintendents and what has become the strongest stretch and conditions for the finest players in the world from all the tours.

I guess my take started to germinate farther back than that.

One of the Korda sisters, Jessica, went low, low on the way to a victory at Stephen Tucker and Lou Eckhart's Four Seasons Resort in Orlando. I know it is pretty hard to shoot 62 without great to perfect conditions but no mention of that.

The Korn Ferry Tour's whole field scored well at Jamie McCroskey's Lakewood Ranch; place was perfect. I did hear comparisons to Augusta at Concession and of Brandon Richey's Lake Nona. But get this, both Terry Kennelly at Concession and Brandon had weeks, not months or years, weeks to prepare for these world class events.

Jack Creveling at Golden Ocala striping bermudagrass and providing mint condition mid-winter surfaces for another stellar LPGA Tour event. Chris Flynn's Bay Hill had wet weather and still managed to stay firm, fast and provide King-sized drama.

Jeff Plotts' Sawgrass showed perfect conditioning can create some wayward shots and big numbers from the leaders until the heart palpitating last shot. And while there was one outlier reaching double-digit red numbers, PGA National allowed the fewest players under par (32) of any Tour event in 2021 to that point.

I don't exactly know when the Florida swing became this type of gauntlet, but I love it. To me, awesome play and the production of challenging conditions speak to the tremendous talent of the ladies and gentlemen who steward these fine properties. The superintendent's motto is "adapt and overcome" but for the above managers and their teams the motto seems to be "accept and raise the bar."

This is just a short subset of all the many tours and courses in Florida that host professional events, in addition their normal play. Ryan Stewart's Copperhead is ready to open up a can on the world's best in May. Chris Senior's Pelican Golf Club brought the LPGA Tour back from COVID-19 purgatory. At Orange County National, Jason Morris hosts PGA Tour school. There are Symetra Tour stops aplenty, like Carlyle Merring's Sara Bay Country Club and Clinton Marr's Alaquia Country Club.

Don't get me started on the Champions Tour. Florida superintendents will host no fewer than seven events for the old guys this year. We're even on the books for some of the world's best amateurs with the Walker Cup at Seminole Golf Club in May.

My takeaway, because I am fortunate to see these places up close and personal in the moment, is pure awe and mad respect to the point I am not even sure I am in the same line of work as these folks. But I do know this; they inspire me to be my best and work to seek finer conditioning at my facility. They also challenge me to be a better leader.

Terry Kennelly's message to his staff and the volunteers at Concession was to have fun. If that were me in those shoes, no way is that the first thing coming out of my mouth. I know Brandon and Chris always make it about their team. I met Jeremiah years back when he was the lead assistant during the Honda Classic; he is just so at peace and comfortable in his lead role now.

And I don't know if you saw this on Twitter; when the pandemic prevented overseas volunteers traveling for The Players, Jeff apparently mailed them a note and a souvenir shirt to "wear with pride while watching..." One of the recipients, Alex Newenham from Ireland Tweeted: "Little details are what separate good from great. In one of their busiest weeks of the year to think about those who couldn't be there is a testament to the team and the @TPCSawgrassAGR team and the insatiable pursuit of detailed excellence."

Amen to that.

These are just a few examples of the great leaders and turf managers in our great state moving our game forward into a bright future.

And one last thing to my classmates a couple decades back at Rutgers: My hope is you are all healthy these days and, of course, I will take your call and try to hook you up at one of the many world class facilities keeping that "weed" alive and mint! ■

- John Reilly is director of agronomy at The Resort at Longboat Key Club near Sarasota.



Justino Cruz from The Concession, served as "Tour" guide for Longboat Key Club's Austin Links and Stephen Patterson, while they volunteered at the WGC-Workday Championship.



Caddy Michael Greller tidies up as Jordan Spieth and Bryson DeChambeau leave the third hole on day one at Bay Hill Club.



The view from the bar at Kenyon Kyle's Wapiti Lodge is postcard worthy.

Kyle Trades Out Golf Course Life for MOUNTAIN LIONS, GRIZZLIES AND MORE

by Trent Bouts

You know that uncomfortable mix of surprise and irritation when you return from the bar, fresh drink in hand, only to find someone has taken your seat? Kenyon Kyle does, and to a degree that most of us, perhaps thankfully, will never experience.



A few weeks back, Kyle was toasting the evening around an outdoor fire in Wyoming when he headed inside to recharge his glass. “Then we heard this crazy noise outside and walked back out of the restaurant to find this mountain lion lying in the chairs we’d been sitting on,” he says.

That’s life now for Kyle. Not long before the mountain lion’s visit, he encountered a grizzly bear eating apples off a tree behind one of the cabins.

A golf course superintendent for three decades in southwest Florida and most recently at Audubon Country Club, Kyle is



Beth and Kenyon Kyle

now proud owner of Wapiti Lodge in Wyoming. The lodge, which sleeps about 50 people across six rooms and three cabins also has a restaurant for about 130 diners, sits less than 30 minutes from the eastern boundary of Yellowstone National Park.

“Probably one of the biggest aspects I loved about being a superintendent was the exposure to the wildlife,” Kyle says. “I just traded in the gators, bobcats and bald eagles for mountain lions, grizzly bears and more bald eagles.” And elk.

“Wapiti is the Native American name for elk,” he explains. “Which suits this place, because I have so many elk and deer here that what they leave behind makes it look like I’ve double aerified my lawn!”

Kyle and his wife, Beth, closed on the purchase of Wapiti Lodge on December 21. He worked his last day at Audubon in Naples on December 30 and was on site in Wyoming on January 5. “It was pretty crazy,” he says.

But while the upheaval was swift, his dramatic career shift was no rush of blood - although some in his circle wavered between admiring his courage and questioning his sanity. They need not have worried. Fact is, at 53, Kyle had spent some time pondering the fork in the road that often looms for men of his vintage.

“You get to a point where you’ve got to decide whether to ride out your career as a golf course superintendent, or if you’re going to try something new,” he says. “A lot of guys transition into something else in the golf business. And I still love the business. But if I was going to be in the business, I’d want to be a superintendent. I always liked the idea of being an entrepreneur, being my own man. But I didn’t want to be starting that when I was 63.”

Then, last summer, some things fell into place.

The Kyles were vacationing in northwest Wyoming, as they had done for years, when they learned Wapiti Lodge was on the market. They stayed there on several trips. “So, I already knew the guy who owned it,” Kyle says. “And we knew the kind of volume and traffic this place gets in the summer. So, it all became pretty seamless. It wasn’t like we were picking up and moving to California without knowing anything or anybody.”

Indeed, Kyle seems as drawn to the people as he is the area.

“Everybody that lives out in this valley is kind of here for the same thing,” he says. “They have great core values. If they didn’t grow up here, and most of them didn’t, they moved here because they didn’t want to sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic.”



The chairs that a mountain lion took a seat in recently. That’s the Shoshone River in the left corner of the picture.

It helped that the Kyles are also recent empty nesters, although the nest didn't stay empty for long. All four of their adult children have extensive hospitality industry experience and by this summer, two of them – daughter, Courtney, and son, Dakota – will be helping run the lodge. The Kyle's oldest daughter, Ashley, is expecting their first grandchild in Kentucky, and youngest son, Keyon, is "having too much fun doing his thing in Nashville."

That Kyle would find himself where he is today would have been a very long bet when he finished his first stint at college. The son of an Ohio banking family, he studied business then took what he thought would be a year, heading south, "To see what there was out there in the world."

He landed a job with the fledgling Bonita Bay Club in Naples and soon after found himself under the wing of Mark Black, CGCS on construction of the club's second course. "I loved it," he says. "Mark looked at me one day and asked, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'Fertilizing greens.' Of course, he said, 'No...what...are...you...doing? Because you either need to go back to school to be a superintendent or go back to Ohio and work in the bank. But I don't want to see you working on the crew for me for the next 30 years.'"

In the end, Kyle did go back to Ohio, but not to the bank. Instead, he enrolled in The Ohio State turfgrass program and as

soon as he graduated, he was back in Naples as Black's assistant. Bonita Bay Club was growing rapidly. Soon, Kyle was running three courses while "good buddy" Matt Taylor, CGCS was in charge of two others. When Black left for Quail West Country Club, Kyle went with him.

Later came eight-year stints at 36-hole Shadow Wood Country Club and three years over what were then four courses at Amelia Island Plantation in the northeastern tip of the state. Then came to the move to Audubon, and back to Naples, in 2009.

It's only been a few months since Kyle closed the door on the profession that sustained him and his family for so long. "I miss the guys. I miss working with the guys on my crew," he says. "I miss the interaction with the members. I miss the personality of it all. Certainly, there are other aspects that I don't miss. But I've always enjoyed the social interaction with those people. But I get that to a similar degree with the local people here. They have really taken us under their wing and supported out restaurant in the off season."

Not long ago, Kyle found himself getting deeper and deeper into conversation with one of those locals who came in for dinner.

"We really hit it off," he says. "There was just something about

this guy that I liked. I didn't know what it was. Pretty soon, I was back doing something in the kitchen and our wives were having their own conversation, and lo and behold, turns out this guy is the superintendent of the golf course in Cody (the nearest town, about 20 miles east). It's interesting how those in our profession just gravitate to one another. And we weren't even talking shop."

To date, Kyle says his role at the lodge offers a similar breadth to his day as golf course work.

"It's really never the same," he says. "I may be working in the kitchen today and may be working on the exterior of the building tomorrow." He makes no claims to expertise in the kitchen – "Let's say I'm a great assistant to my wife!" – he does hope to build new skills away from the lodge.

"The friends I've made out here are experienced fly fishermen. Several guys have outfitter operations where they'll do pack trips on horses," he says. "Some are hunting guides, and those are some of the things I want to learn. In the meantime, I'm getting calls from my superintendent buddies from all over saying they want to do this or that, or maybe hunt an elk. They wonder if we can hook them up and my answer to that is, 'Certainly.'"

Some of Kyle's golf industry friends have already visited, among them, Jeff Spangler, senior vice-president of science agronomy

at Troon, who stayed during a skiing trip. Brian Hampson, Troon's VP of the same portfolio, was on his way with his family in March. Hal Akins, CGCS from Bonita Bay Club, has a visit scheduled this spring and Tim Hiers, CGCS now with White Oak Properties, also called recently floating the idea of a visit.

None will be disappointed, Kyle says, "It's probably the most amazing topography I've seen, and the wildlife is phenomenal. The other day, we'd been working around the lodge and I said, 'Let's get out of here and take a drive. So, we hopped in the truck and drove maybe 15 minutes up the road and back. All the way we were taking pictures and video of bison right off the side of the road.'"

The exhilaration that comes with an experience like that is among a host of things Kyle hoped for when he chose his alternative path. If there are any concerns about him leaving such a successful career on the golf course, they are not held by Kyle.

"I never really had any fear or apprehension about doing this," he says. "My wife is from Ohio too, so we're both familiar with the change of seasons. We're familiar with the property and we know some of the people. We're really looking forward to working with our family. This is what we want to do and where we want to do it. I'm having a blast." ■



Deer, and at times elk, are as much a part of the scenery at Wapiti Lodge as cars in the parking lot.



The view outside Kenyon Kyle's new "office" door is a far cry from what he looked out on for so long as a golf course superintendent.



Tyler Robb is on a firm career footing now at The Loxahatchee Club, despite a year of major changes.

Robb's Year of Interruptions BECOMES ONE TO REMEMBER

By Craig Smith

In a year of hardship, loss and death caused by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, few young men in golf course maintenance were impacted as much as 29-year-old Tyler Robb, now assistant superintendent at The Loxahatchee Club in Jupiter.

At this time last year, Robb was without a job and wondering if he had enough money saved to move forward with getting married as planned. He and fiancé Claudia Valdes were still trying to figure it all out when social restrictions issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) made a large wedding not just impractical but dangerous.

"We had a big wedding planned for June 5 of last year, with a reception at the Garden Villa in Orlando. But when I lost my job and COVID hit, we couldn't make the wedding work like we planned," says Ross, who, at press time, was nearing the end of his first year at The Loxahatchee Club. "I wondered if we were going to get married at all."

But as the big date approached, rather than be disappointed, Claudia and Tyler opted to marry without the presence of family and friends. "We just decided that we weren't going to let COVID get in the way of our love for each other," Robb recalls. They eloped to Port St. Lucie for a short ceremony and then headed to Key West for a honeymoon, with the full support of Jim Sprankle, CGCS, Robb's boss and head superintendent at Loxahatchee.

"I don't know if I would be married if he hadn't hired me last



Tyler Robb

April," Robb says. "And then he gave me the time off, even though I hadn't earned enough vacation to go away. He's given me a lot, and I am very appreciative. It's now time for me to get to work and prove to Jim that he hired the right guy."

Robb had the credentials and the passion to be a good fit at Loxahatchee, a Jack Nicklaus designed course that was host to the 1992 U.S. Senior Amateur, just seven years after it opened. "It's one of my most imaginative courses and certainly one of the best I've ever done," Nicklaus is quoted as saying on the club website.

Sprankle, 55, is in his 14th year at Loxahatchee, where Gary Player is one of the notable members. "I knew Tyler from Pipers Landing. He had a great interview and he just kind of fell in my lap," Sprankle says. "The course hasn't skipped a beat

with Tyler on board. He manages situations with a good balance, and he works well with the staff and my other assistant. We've gotten so many compliments on the course this year, and that doesn't happen by accident. We have a great team."

Looking over his shoulder at his last 12 months - getting married and working at Loxahatchee - Robb can only shake his head and laugh. "There have been a lot of ups and downs. Most of it was not very good until Jim hired me. But I've had a lot of good luck since then," says Robb, who has learned to laugh at his misfortunes. In an additional bit of good news, early this year he became the newest member of the Treasure Coast GCSA board of directors.

Robb bounced around after dropping out of college at his first attempt. A native of Manassas, VA, a short drive west from Washington, DC, he didn't have any direction to his life. He was following the path that baseball that Hall-of-Famer Yogi Berra was talking about when he once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up someplace else."

A handful of odd jobs helped fill the void. Robb was a blackjack dealer, a cook and cashier at an Arby's, and a general contractor. He even worked at an auction house; but he found his career path when he was hired at a golf course to rake bunkers and pick golf balls off the range.

"I found out I loved working on a golf course," says Robb, who was pointed toward the turf studies program at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He applied and started classes within three weeks; and this time he attended college with a purpose, graduating in 2015.

As he approached that milestone, Claudia became his guiding light. She alerted him to a job at Pipers Landing Yacht and Golf Club in Palm City, and he got the job. Claudia even arranged for him to stay with her dad, who lived in the Palm City area. While all this was happening in Robb's life, Claudia was busy advancing her own career in the medical field following graduation from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA, where she played on the Flames' NCAA Division I women's lacrosse team.

Two years on, the two were comfortably settled in Florida, when fortunes turned. Robb lost his job at Pipers Landing at the onset of the pandemic. But this time, Robb righted the ship in a hurry. Just two weeks later, he jumped on a social media post looking for an assistant at Loxahatchee.

"I drove there the next day and I got to meet some people. Jim and I talked as we drove around the club. I was nervous," admits Robb. Nervous or not, Robb made a good impression. It was just a couple days later when Sprankle called him back and asked if he could come back to Loxahatchee to talk some more. "I remember, Jim said, 'I know enough about you that I'd like to hire you right now,'" Robb says. "I felt like I had won the lottery."

Robb felt like he was big winner a second time when he married Claudia, after a slow start to their romance. They both attended the same high school, Brentsville District, in Virginia but didn't learn much about each other until they met on social media some time later. They dated for four years before Robb proposed at Jensen Beach in September 2018.

"I remember she wasn't happy with me that day, but she still said, yes," Robb reflects. "Between having Claudia and my job at Loxahatchee, it's a pretty sweet future. Everything turned around all at once. I am going to keep moving forward and be the best me I can be." ■

- Craig Smith is a freelance writer and former communications director for GCSAA and before that, director of media relations with the USGA.



Tyler Robb and bride Claudia Valdes make for a happy couple in spite of the pandemic which put an end to their plans for a big wedding. For the record, the "wedding" photos were taken some time after they eloped. (Photo courtesy of Rosi Guyton Photography)

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NEW

"SOMETHING SPECTACULAR"

Salter Inherits Renovated Riviera

by Trent Bouts

Riviera Country Club in Coral Gables is a long way from Detroit, Michigan. On Christmas Day of 2005, P.J. Salter, right, began the drive, throwing a few clothes and his Australian cattle dog, Lucy, into a white Mustang borrowed from his father.

But Salter's journey to the historic property and its Donald Ross golf course began long before that.

Maybe as far back as when he was 5 or 6, pulling weeds from the base paths and backstop area at Detroit

Catholic Central High School where his dad, a teacher, also coached baseball. At that age, the idea such work could earn you \$5 and a Happy Meal, left quite an impression.

Today, at age 38, Salter is director of agronomy at Riviera, a club that since 2015, spent \$10 million renovating that Ross course and another \$37 million replacing the clubhouse. Needless to say, his pay no longer comes with fries or a plastic toy, but you had better believe he's happy all the same.

"To go from graduating college to a job like I am fortunate to have here, there is so much sweat equity that goes into that," he says. "And there's so much sacrifice that your wife and kids have to make given the hours you work and the moves you have to make, to get ahead. So, I see myself being here long term. My family is happy. I see us being here as long as the club is happy with me."

Meteoric may be too strong a term to describe Salter’s rise in the profession. For his wife, Lisa Marie Jess, it likely didn’t feel that way. A Michigan girl herself, bouncing from Naples, to Miami, to the Keys, up to Vero Beach then back to Miami, inside a decade, had to be grinding.

“Every time I wanted to move for my career, my wife supported me,” Salter says. “She said, ‘I’ll stop what I’m doing, and we’ll move again.’”

But if not meteoric, how else would you describe Salter’s ascent from absolute novice to signing on to his current role in a mere decade – from the last days of 2005 to February 2016.

“Any success I’ve had is, by and large, a product of someone taking me in and showing me the ropes,” he says. “I worked really hard for them, and they worked really hard with me.”

None more so than Eric von Hofen, now general manager at The Club at Weston Hills in Weston, 45 minutes north. Just a year after arriving in Florida as a second assistant to Jason Gerlach at the Golf Club of the Everglades, Salter landed with von Hofen at Riviera. If Michigan State, where Salter earned his

degree, churned out turfgrass grads, von Hofen was a one-man superintendent finishing school.

“Eric’s greatest accomplishment, he would tell you without hesitation, is all the guys he mentored who went on to become superintendents or directors of golf course maintenance. It’s up to 33 now I think,” Salter says.

“Eric showed us everything, way above and beyond green speeds and dialed in turf. We would go to the green committee meetings with him. He let us see the good, the bad and the ugly. He would pull out the financials every month and go over them with us, explaining everything.”

Given that degree of immersion, Salter’s three and a half years under von Hofen counted like dog years in terms of professional experience. Salter had one other leg up on most colleagues around his age. He was fluent in Spanish, a major asset working with a labor pool so reliant on the Latin Americas. To learn the language during high school, Salter pored over flash cards. At Riviera, he had expert instruction on tap from a crew dominated by Cubans and Puerto Ricans.

The tower of the historic Biltmore Hotel maintains a distant vigil over the new-look Riviera Country Club.



Director of golf Joey Ludeman and P.J. Salter were colleagues at Riviera during Salter’s first stint at the club.

One in particular, Pablo Veitia, who Triplexed approaches and mowed rough, appreciated Salter’s interest in improving his Spanish. “He became my professor,” Salter smiles. “I would pick five words every week and he would show me how to conjugate them.” At every encounter over the course of a day, the professor would run the student through a quiz.

“My first three and a half years here were when I really developed my Spanish,” Salter says. “I had an hour-long commute and would listen to Spanish radio. And before kids, and having to watch cartoons all afternoon, I’d make it a point to watch the news or a telenovela, just to pick up the speed of a native speaker.”

That ability to communicate and connect, as distinct from merely instruct, played a critical role in his success after he left Riviera, for his first superintendent position over 18 of 36 holes at Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo. There he found a golf course in need of care, just like the crew.

Before closing out his second day on the job, Salter suggested to his assistant that they map out the next morning’s job board. When he met resistance and asked why, he was told: “It doesn’t really work like that. We have to wait and see who shows up.”

“Every day we had \$40-million private jet after \$40-million private jet coming in over the fourth, sixth and 10th holes,” Salter

says of the Dolphin course next to the club’s private airport. “All that was going on overhead, while below, we had a course that was in really bad shape. We needed to change the culture. The (almost exclusively Hispanic) team wasn’t being appreciated.”

Newly arrived director of agronomy, Juan Gutierrez, himself a von Hofen protégé, set about instituting a “culture of care,” with Salter an ideally qualified lieutenant. “It was tremendous to be able to initiate real relationships with the guys so they could understand the culture we were trying to create,” Salter says.

“The guys down there are super talented, just like they are here. Most guys on these crews can mow a green, change a cup, do the detail work, better than I ever could when I was coming up.

“So, it was important for us to appreciate the team for what they did, to show them respect and get them to buy into how much their roles contributed to everyone’s success. In six months, we went from where we were to being something special.”

After four years at Ocean Reef, Salter moved on to venerable Riomar Country Club in Vero Beach. It was 2014 and Salter took over from Jim Callaghan, a Riomar institution after nearly 40 years in the role, as the club for a renovation perhaps best described as massive rather than major.

Riomar’s first nine holes were built in 1919 over dunes along-

side the Atlantic Ocean. The second nine, crafted out of the mangroves, didn't appear until 1962. As if permitting hurdles weren't enough to raise a sweat, that back nine needed to be raised a foot above grade. Of course, there was much more involved, but the point is that Salter was the man in the hot seat - and he'd been out of school just eight years.

He will tell you there was a time when he thought he knew it all. He cites one example as a "punk 11- or 12-year-old" when his dad was offering tips on the driving range. The younger Salter was so stubbornly resistant that the elder suggested he stick his club somewhere other than his golf bag.

Salter laughs at the recollection then admits that same streak of independence, self-confidence, call what you will, led to "some doses of humble pie" since returning to Riviera. "One thing I've learned as I've gotten older, is that I don't have all the answers," he says.

"When I started back here five years ago, I thought I knew everything. Thought I didn't need to ask anybody for help. Now, I've completely changed that. My superintendent toolbox consists of different consultants and colleagues that I turn to

when I need help and the result is, the golf course has never been better."

In reality, it's not the first time in his life he's been open to input.

Starting college, he was going to be a doctor. But when that "didn't work out so well," he redirected to business. "That didn't work out so well either," he says. On a break after two years of college, Terri Ryan, a PGA teaching professional and family friend who had given Salter a pro shop job during high school, suggested he consider golf course maintenance.

"She knew I liked getting up early and loved being outside," he recalls. "So, she said, 'Michigan State has this great turfgrass program and you can make a good living at it. Why not take a look?'"

Salter was curious. Seeds had been sown long ago.

"We had maybe three quarters of an acre at home and my dad loved mowing his lawn with his John Deere riding mower," he says. "He would never let me mow the lawn so I always joked that there must have been something great about it."

This aerial view shows off some of the movement in terrain introduced by the renovation.



P.J. Salter had thoughts of becoming a doctor until he discovered the world of a golf course superintendent.

Salter certainly felt great when he set foot back at Riviera to interview for his current position. If Ocean Reef was a repair and Riomar a renovation, this time he was getting a golf course fresh off the lot. Von Hofen steered the club through the overhaul at the hands of architect Kipp Schulties and what was on the ground now was markedly different to what Salter left behind nearly five years earlier.

"I will never forget it," Salter says. "Previously, it was your typical Florida golf course, flat as a pancake, your tees were raised, your greens were raised. So, I step onto the first tee with Eric, Mark Snure, the general manager, and Joey Ludeman, the director of golf; all these guys I worked with before, and the hair on the back of my neck stood up.

"Now, for South Florida, the golf course has a lot of movement thanks to the shaping, the cutting into rock and pushing stuff around that they did with Kipp Schulties. I was like, 'Wow, you guys have done something spectacular here!'"

With hindsight, it was a good thing Salter's new job was with old friends in familiar territory made anew. About a year in, he became the father of twin girls, Colette and Persephone, to go with another, Tallulah, a toddler herself. Persephone was born with a rare condition, Axenfeld-Reiger Syndrome. In her first

year, she underwent two open heart surgeries and 10 surgeries on one eye. An infection after one of the heart procedures carried a 60 percent mortality rate.

Salter doesn't say so, but it had to have been a hellish year. What he does say of "Persi" is simply, "She's a warrior." Inspired by their daughter's spirit, the Salters founded the Persephone Mae Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit to assist families with children effected by rare conditions and visual impairments.

"Drawing on our connections here and the brotherhood of what is being a superintendent, and all the vendors who support us, we've raised about \$140,000 in three years," Salter says. Two golf tournaments generated the bulk of the money raised to date. "We want to help those who don't have what, by the grace of God, we were fortunate enough to have."

The club, he says, was "great all along," including when he was away from the golf course for days at a time. Persephone was treated by one of the world's leading ophthalmologists in Pittsburgh, PA thanks to the club's help negotiating out-of-network coverage by insurers.

"The compassion this club has makes it a fantastic place to work," Salter says. "I knew that back when I was an assistant

but when something hits you in the face, and you need somebody, it's outstanding. I also knew that when I was gone nothing would be wrong with the golf course." For that, he thanks golf course superintendent Drew Nottenkamper, first assistant Mike Smith and second assistant Mike Heinz. "These guys are tremendous," he says.

His daughter's health is far from the only extra concern Salter has taken on in recent years. He achieved his certification from GCSAA in December, has served on the South Florida GCSA board, and, as a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador, played an influential role along with the Florida GCSA in earning critical exemptions for golf in new fertilizer ordinances in the area.

The work continues though, because the Miami-Dade exemption comes with conditions, including a testing component for both soil and water on golf courses to monitor any influence on water quality in the area. Salter is collaborating closely with authorities to help frame the testing methodology.

"We all want the same thing. We all want clean water. My kids

live here. This is something I want them to enjoy," Salter says. "So, I've taken the approach, let me stop fighting with these people, and let me just reach out and open up my books. Instead of just saying, 'It's not me, it's not me.' Let's work together in the hope of showing them that it is not me. More importantly, if it is me, let's learn that, and make the change to get it right."

Clearly, P.J. Salter has packed a lot into his still young career. Sitting on the porch of Riviera's sparkling new clubhouse and stunning golf course, with the tower of the historic Biltmore Hotel off in the distance, he is grateful for every part of it.

"I always tell my assistants, the only difference between us and anybody who works on our team, is that we were more fortunate with our opportunities in life," he says. But that doesn't mean a man can't wish for a little more.

"Yeah, I'm hoping there will be some money left over to build me a new shop at some point." ■

P.J. Salter is working with authorities to help frame the methodology for testing water quality in Miami Dade County.



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AFTER THINKING “IT” WAS OVER

When a malignant tumor, near the size of a football, attaches to your heart and a lung, you have every right to set your career aside and concentrate on putting your affairs in order. When you're only 29 and the father of four children, the imperative is surely all the greater. Such was Chris Monserate's circumstance in mid-2012.

Then assistant golf course superintendent at Grand Palms Resort in Pembroke Pines, Monserate didn't just fear the worst, he expected it. Doctors in Miami gave him a coin flip's chance of surviving their proposed surgery and treatment. “I definitely thought it was over, no doubt I did,” he says. “I was a bit down for a while.”

No kidding.

Yet today, nearly a decade later, Monserate is not only still with us and cancer free, he is now golf course superintendent at Grand Palms, a 27-hole public facility adjacent to a 180-room hotel. It is also highly likely that he is happier than he might have been had the cancer never appeared.

Chris Monserate is more to take a moment for himself and his family these days.

Turns out, the whole ordeal cured him of another affliction, one he knew he had but couldn't kick. “The term workaholic is putting it extremely lightly,” he says, of a “dark to dark” dedication to the job. “It was raging. I was just driving, driving, non-stop. I didn't appreciate anything. That changed.”

You shouldn't have to confront your own mortality to discover what matters most. But superintendents are notoriously torn between two loves, their work and their family. Of course, they are not alone in that, but the golf course is never finished, and besides, many have a great “superintendent” taking care of things at home. At some point, for some, the professional passion becomes an obsession.

“I try to spend a lot more time with the family now,” Monserate says. “And I play golf every week, whereas before, if I played once every two months that was a lot. I realized you don't have to live at the job.”

The work ethic, he imagines, was passed on from his Puerto Rican parents, his father in particular. Growing up in Conway,

South Carolina – now practically a suburb of Myrtle Beach – Monserate remembers his dad working “four or five different jobs.”

“He always worked, every single day. Always came home dirty and never missed a beat,” Monserate says. “I think it was ingrained, subconsciously, that you show up every day, and that's it, no excuses.” Sounds a lot like that unofficial superintendent credo of, ‘You do what it takes.’

So, at 16 and still in high school, he sought work of his own, turning up unannounced at Myrtle Beach National.

“Since that day on, I've been employed at a golf club,” Monserate, now 38, says. “My dad always had clubs and we had a decent piece of property. So, we'd chip in the yard and hit balls. But when I played my first official round, I didn't think much of it. I thought it was kind of boring.”

Monserate's job came with free golf and his boss, Max Morgan, CGCS, an avid player, made sure there was a regular tee time for staff each week. “I found a real love for the game,” Monserate says. “Still have it.”

He also enjoyed cars, and his dad knew his way around them well enough to help Monserate lift the four-cylinder engine out of his first car, a Mustang, and replace with an eight. By the time he headed to Florida in 2004, he'd fully restored a 1973 Chevy Cheyenne truck, “That was the year they came out with the first square body,” he says.

In a moment of maturity beyond his years – for which he stills kicks himself occasionally – he swapped that truck for his brother's Ford Taurus. Maybe it was a voice in his head, maybe the voice of Steve York, the veteran irrigation tech from Myrtle Beach National, who mentored about life as much as the job.

“There's times when I wish I hadn't done that,” Monserate laughs. “Because I'd spent all the money I had on that truck. But I thought I needed the four-door Taurus coming to Miami.” He was a father of two infant children after all, his first coming at 17.

Even then, Monserate believed his wife, Lisa, was his guiding



If he had enough money to look after his family, Chris Monserate says he loves his profession so much he'd do it for nothing.

light. He admits, that beyond working hard, there was never any great ambition. “Other than getting out of school,” he grins. “School and me didn't get along all that great.” Lisa, on the other hand, knew her path, graduating with honors and a 4.0 GPA from Coastal Carolina, and as a mother, remember.

When she chose a grad school in Miami to extend her nursing credentials, Monserate didn't hesitate. He fired off maybe a dozen letters to golf courses in Broward County, and they hit I-95 soon after. When none replied, Monserate found himself knocking on doors again.

One of his first calls, Orangebrook Country Club. “They hired me as an irrigation tech, which was right in my wheelhouse,” Monserate says. After a month of watching Monserate being underemployed, the assistant superintendent suggested he apply at Grand Palms, where they were getting ready for a renovation.

Grand Palms superintendent, Sean Plummer, now with Hamp-

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ton Golf in Ocala, hired Monserrate as an assistant. “Sean was a great guy who treated me really well,” he says. “He helped me along for sure.” But by the time the renovation was complete in 2006, Monserrate was ready for something more.

When an assistant’s role on another renovation presented itself within the same company at Kings Point Golf in Delray Beach, Monserrate moved on. After a year there, he received an offer from Broward golf legend, Johnny Laponzina, at Raintree Golf Resort. It wasn’t just the superintendent title that appealed. Instead of a 90-minute round trip each day, Monserrate would now be working just three miles from home.

Life was good at Raintree until CVS was so desperate for 10 acres on one corner of the property, the pharmacy giant bought all 150 and the golf course closed permanently. The good news was that by now, Monserrate was no longer an unknown in the area. By the time Raintree closed, he had a couple of irons in the fire.

One of those options - after two and a half years as a superintendent - was returning to Grand Palms as an assistant. Monserrate was fine with that and his new boss, Tommy Joe Coffey, fresh from a stint in Bermuda, turned out to be a “fantastic guy, an amazing guy.” Coffey also turned out to be “a really close friend,” which mattered greatly given what was ahead.

“I was skin and bones, lost maybe 50 pounds. Could barely walk.” – Chris Monserrate

Repairing an irrigation leak one day, Monserrate noticed some shortness of breath. He’d also been tiring quickly. Tests soon led doctors to the tumor, the result of extragonadal cancer, that is, a cancer stemming from the testicles but not present there. Even so, in addition to a 50-50 chance of survival, doctors told Monserrate they would need to remove the testicles and had even set the surgery date.

At this point in the story, we learn why Monserrate will tell you - “With no hyperbole involved whatsoever” – that his wife is “an incredible woman.” “Everything I have become to this point, is because of her ... she’s a go-getter,” he says.

It was Lisa, sifting determinedly through online sources, who found a doctor she thought might be able to improve her husband’s chances. This doctor, Lawrence Einhorn, in Indiana developed a treatment regime that had produced remarkable results over the years. But he was now in his 70s and no longer taking new patients.

“My wife sent him a moving email, about the family and kids and all this,” Monserrate says. “And he agreed to meet with me. So, we flew to Indiana and he looked at me and asked about my physical condition. I told him I’d never missed a day of work in my life. And he said, ‘You’re going to be fine. We can cure this.’”

The next hurdle was getting insurance to pay for surgery with a doctor and a hospital system that were way out of network. Again, Lisa refused to take no for an answer. She appealed to the in-system doctors - those who could only offer a 50-50 chance of survival – to get on board and they

did, successfully lobbying the insurers to pay for Monserrate’s care with Dr. Einhorn. With the money issue resolved, the real battle began.

To prepare for surgery, Monserrate underwent five sessions of chemotherapy in Miami. With each, he had five consecutive days of treatment in hospital and wasn’t allowed home afterwards until he could eat and walk, something that took two or three days each time. Then he had a month to rebuild some strength before doing it all over again.

By the time of his flight to Indiana for what became a seven-hour surgery to remove the now-shrunken tumor, and place a Gortex cap on his damaged pericardium, “I was skin and bones, lost maybe 50 pounds,” he says. “Could barely walk.”

About six months after diagnosis, Monserrate, testes intact, was declared cancer free. “There’s been nothing since. Incredible,” he says. Within a year, he was promoted to superintendent.

In addition to better balancing work and home time as a result of his ordeal, Monserrate has worked to be more outgoing. “I am definitely an introvert, 100 percent, for sure” he says. But with encouragement from Jason Bailey at Parkland Golf and Country Club, among others, Monserrate took a seat on the board of the South Florida GCSA and is on track to be the next president.

His kids - Arielle, 21, Natalia, 18, Noah, 14, Lilliana, 10 - are all thriving, and Lisa continues to steer her own career success. Monserrate, himself, is never far removed from reminders of that day when he sensed the irrigation leak wasn’t the only thing wrong.

“When they did the renovation here, they left a lot of the older infrastructure,” he says. “The irrigation system is literally the one that was put in back in the ‘70s. An old hydraulic system with leaks everywhere. It’s a never-ending battle, as anyone who’s been on a hydraulic course knows. You know, still, I like it. I feel at home in a hole.”

And Broward Country now feels like home too. His parents moved there to help out when he became ill. Younger brother, Juan, not only moved as well, he also took on golf course maintenance and is an assistant at Davie Golf Club to Patrick O’Fee, regional superintendent for Greenway Golf.

Not surprisingly, Monserrate is grateful for what he has, in life and in work, but somewhere in his future, he sees more. “I’m aspiring to something. I know this is not going to be the end of it, I just know it’s not,” he says.



The Monserrates: Chris, Lisa, Arielle, Natalia, Noah and Lilliana in front.

“But honestly, I don’t know what’s next, and I’m not in a rush to get to what’s next. I’m pretty happy here right now. I love this profession, so whatever it will be, it will be. Honestly, if my finances would sustain it, I’d do this job for nothing.” ■



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Evaluating Tropical Signalgrass Control PROGRAMS IN SEASHORE PASPALUM

by Patrick McCullough, Ph.D.

The following article is excerpted from the final report on tropical signalgrass control that can be found on the Florida GCSA website. Rounds 4 Research funds were used in this work and disbursed from the Florida GCSA research fund.

Tropical signalgrass (*Urochloa subquadriflora*) is a troublesome weed in golf course turfgrass. Infestations are particularly difficult to control in areas where tropical signalgrass overwinters and grows in polyculture with turfgrasses year-round.

The release of tropical signalgrass is associated with restrictions on MSMA use along with a lack of cost-effective alternative herbicides. Controlling perennial infestations may require strategic use of cultural practices and herbicide programs over multiple years to effectively control this weed on golf courses.

Seashore paspalum golf courses often have the most difficulty managing tropical signalgrass, compared to clubs with bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, due to the lack of selective herbicides available for grassy weed control. The most selective post-emergence herbicide, Xonerate (amicarbazone), requires repeat applications at high rates that often provide erratic control.

Regrowth of patches in late summer is common especially when paspalum is thinned due to the presence of heavy weed infestations. Fall applications of Xonerate are generally more effective than summer timings, but superintendents often cannot make these treatments prior to winter play due to excessive turf thinning and discoloration in treated areas.

Superintendents have several potential tools available for weed control in seashore paspalum including salt, herbicide mixtures and cultural practices. Coordinating these programs can help manage tropical signalgrass over time to effectively release

seashore paspalum. Research was conducted to evaluate new approaches to tropical signalgrass control including:

- Xonerate use with salt for controlling tropical signalgrass
- Screen herbicide tank-mixtures for selective tropical signalgrass control
- Herbicides with cultural practices to help release seashore paspalum

The research was conducted in seashore paspalum roughs at The Oaks Club in Osprey and Pasadena Yacht and Country Club in Gulfport. Tropical signalgrass at these locations were perennial infestations with about 30 to 50 percent initial ground cover. Experiments were conducted in standard small plot research designs with four replications. Sprayable treatments were applied



Figure 1. Plots in July following Xonerate and salt treatments in seashore paspalum.

with CO2-pressured sprayers. Granular herbicides were applied with a shaker.

Evaluation of Xonerate programs with salt for enhancing tropical signalgrass control in seashore paspalum.

Field experiments were conducted at The Oaks Club in a seashore paspalum rough (Figure 1). Xonerate was applied singly or sequentially at 14.5 oz/acre in June and followed by salt at 0, 20, or 40 lb/1000 sq. ft. two weeks after the final Xonerate treatment. A nontreated check was included. Salt was applied with dew present. A non-ionic surfactant was included at 0.25 percent v/v with the Xonerate treatments.

In this experiment, seashore paspalum had good tolerance (15 percent or less injury) to all treatments evaluated from June to August. Two Xonerate applications in June controlled tropical signalgrass 75 percent at one month after initial treatments. Regrowth was detected and control declined to 54 percent or less on subsequent evaluations.

A single application of Xonerate followed by salt at 20 or 40 lb/1000 sq. ft. increased tropical signalgrass control to ≥90 percent for eight weeks. There was no difference between salt rates detected and control averaged 82 percent at 10 weeks after the initial Xonerate treatment.

Two applications of Xonerate followed by salt at 20 or 40 lb/1000 sq ft gave 100 percent control of tropical signalgrass in July and averaged 95 percent control in August. Programs with salt applied two weeks after a single treatment of Xonerate gave faster control than when salt was applied two weeks after a sequential Xonerate treatment (Figure 2).

The nontreated paspalum averaged five percent turf cover in August due to severe infestations and competition of tropical signalgrass. Two applications of Xonerate increased seashore

paspalum cover to only 20 percent at six weeks after initial treatments. Applying salt at 20 lb/1000 sq. ft. two weeks after a single treatment of Xonerate in June enhanced the speed of seashore paspalum release throughout the summer compared to other programs.

By mid-July, plots treated with Xonerate once followed by salt averaged 56 percent paspalum cover and was greater than all other treatments. Paspalum release following a single Xonerate treatment with salt at the high rate, 40 lb/1000 sq. ft., increased turf cover to only 31 percent, which lagged plots treated with the lower rate of salt. This was comparable to plots treated with Xonerate twice with and without a sequential salt application.

The salt treatment at the high rate after two Xonerate treatments did not improve seashore paspalum release compared to Xonerate applied without salt. Programs consisting of Xonerate once followed by salt at either rate, and Xonerate twice followed by salt at 20 lb/1000 sq. ft. increased seashore paspalum to an average of 66 percent ground cover. There was no benefit to increasing the salt rate from 20 to 40 lb/1000 sq. ft. after Xonerate treatments.

Overall, two applications of Xonerate gave temporary control of tropical signalgrass but regrowth was detected with no increase in paspalum cover relative to the nontreated. Using salt at 20 lb/1000 sq. ft. two weeks after a single Xonerate application



Figure 2. Tropical signalgrass control in seashore paspalum following Xonerate and salt treatments.



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enhanced tropical signalgrass control and released seashore paspalum to 14 times greater cover than the nontreated.

Increasing the salt rate to 40 lb/1000 sq. ft. was unnecessary and may delay the regrowth of paspalum over time compared to the lower salt rate. There was also no benefit to making a second Xonerate application when salt was used in the program. In fact, two applications of Xonerate followed by salt delayed the time for paspalum to regrow as turf cover lagged plots treated with Xonerate once followed by salt.

The use of salt may be a temporary remedy for controlling tropical signalgrass infestations in seashore paspalum. Excessive use of salt may have severe impacts on soil structure that leads to detrimental effects on turfgrass growth over time. The key to using salt is maximizing the foliar retention on tropical signalgrass by making applications with dew present. Further research is needed to evaluate lower rates of salt on tropical signalgrass control with various rates and regimens of Xonerate used in seashore paspalum to reduce the costs of remediation programs.

Evaluation of herbicide combinations for tropical signalgrass control in seashore paspalum.

This experiment was conducted to screen 13 herbicide combinations to potentially improve efficacy for tropical signalgrass control. Plots received two applications of each treatment on

a 14-day interval. Programs that included Specticle Flo only received this treatment with the initial application.

Tropical signalgrass control with Xonerate alone averaged 58 percent and 40 percent at four and eight weeks after initial treatments (WAIT). This is the standard, selective herbicide used in seashore paspalum and results were comparable to our other experiments.

Combining Xonerate with Pylex at 0.5 oz/acre gave good (80 to 89 percent) to excellent (90 to 100 percent) control of tropical signalgrass over the eight weeks. These treatments injured seashore paspalum up to 38 percent, which was characterized by stunted growth and bleaching (whitening) of the turfgrass. Injury declined but still averaged 21 percent after one month.

Excellent control of tropical signalgrass was also detected when Xonerate was tank-mixed with Fusilade at six oz/acre or Fusilade + Specticle Flo at three oz/acre followed by Fusilade. However, these treatments increased paspalum injury to greater than 50 percent at rates tested.

The most selective combination that improved tropical signalgrass control better than Xonerate alone was Xonerate + Q4-Plus. This combination increased control to 73 percent after eight weeks and paspalum injury never exceeded 18 percent.

Although this program provided fair control (70 to 79 percent), it was more effective than Xonerate alone and many other combinations evaluated. The addition of Dismiss, Sencor, and PoaCure with Xonerate did not improve control from Xonerate alone at rates tested.

The most promising combinations evaluated from this research included Xonerate + Pylex, Xonerate + Q4-Plus, and Xonerate + Specticle Flo followed by Xonerate. These treatments all gave fair control of tropical signalgrass, better than Xonerate alone, while releasing seashore paspalum greater than the nontreated plots.

These herbicide combinations should be evaluated in sequential programs with various rates and regimens, particularly the Xonerate + Pylex combination. There may be potential to improve the selectivity of this treatment by reducing rates and making more frequent applications. The modes of action of these herbicides (PS-II + HPPD-inhibition) have synergistic activity on susceptible weeds and there could be a potential benefit to adding Pylex with Xonerate for spot treatments of tropical signalgrass patches.

Q4-Plus suppresses tropical signalgrass growth with repeat applications of high rates (seven to eight pt/acre). Combining Q4-Plus with Xonerate improves tropical signalgrass control with minimal injury to seashore paspalum.

Fusilade has good activity on tropical signalgrass alone but is not selective enough in seashore paspalum for broadcast applications at rates evaluated. Perhaps, low rates at frequent intervals could improve selectivity in paspalum and will be investigated in future research. Fusilade may also have potential for spot treating tropical signalgrass patches in summer followed by broadcast applications of Xonerate or other herbicides with better selectivity in seashore paspalum.

This work will help us focus on certain combinations that offer more consistent control of tropical signalgrass than Xonerate alone in seashore paspalum going forward. Although this research was conducted in paspalum, most of these herbicides are labeled for bermudagrass and the results could be applicable to superintendents managing other turfgrass species.

In future experiments, the Xonerate + Pylex and Xonerate + Q4-Plus will be included to help refine application rates and regimens to maximize the selectivity for tropical signalgrass control in seashore paspalum.

Tropical signalgrass control with herbicide programs and verticutting.

Pre-emergence herbicide programs were initiated in late winter 2020 and consisted of Ronstar 2G, Dimension, Barricade, and Specticle Flo. Post-emergence herbicides included Xonerate at 14.5 oz/acre + methylated seed oil at 0.5 percent v/v and Xonerate at 14.5 oz/acre + Roundup Pro at six oz/acre. All post-emergence herbicides were applied twice on a two-week interval in June. Verticutting was conducted two weeks after the sequential post-emergence treatments over half of all plots. The entire area was fertilized at one lb N/1000 sq. ft. (20-0-12, Harrell's Polyon blend) after verticutting.

At The Oaks Club, seashore paspalum injury from Xonerate was about 10 percent or less at two and four weeks after initial treatments. The addition of Roundup to Xonerate treatments increased paspalum injury compared to Xonerate alone, but injury never exceeded 24 percent.

Tropical signalgrass control from Xonerate alone was fair (70 to 79 percent) after one month and the addition of Roundup with Xonerate increased control to an average of 94 percent. Tropical signalgrass in the nontreated plots increased from 54 percent to 70 percent from July to late September.

The most effective programs for reducing tropical signalgrass infestations from the non-treated included pre-emergence treatments of Dimension followed by Specticle Flo followed by Xonerate, Xonerate + Roundup Pro alone, Dimension followed by Xonerate + Roundup, and Ronstar followed by Xonerate + Roundup. These programs reduced signalgrass cover by about


half of the non-treated by late summer but did not eliminate infestations.

Seashore paspalum cover in the non-treated plots averaged 22 percent in late September. Turf treated with Dimension followed by Specticle followed by Xonerate had paspalum released to 56 percent. Xonerate + Roundup Pro without pre-emergence herbicides increased paspalum cover to 40 percent.

All other programs did not increase seashore paspalum ground cover from the non-treated. The verticutting operation performed over half of every plot did not improve control of tropical signalgrass or turfgrass cover through the fall.

At Pasadena Yacht and Country Club, seashore paspalum injury from Xonerate averaged 10 percent or less. The addition of Roundup to Xonerate treatments increased injury by ~10 percent but results were acceptable. There was no benefit to using Roundup with Xonerate compared to Xonerate alone as all treatments averaged 88 percent control of tropical signalgrass after four weeks (Figure 3).


The infestations of tropical signalgrass increased from 31 percent to 49 percent cover in the non-treated plots from July to late Sep-




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Figure 3. Tropical signalgrass control and paspalum tolerance two weeks after initial treatments.

tember. All programs initially reduced tropical signalgrass from the non-treated plots in summer, but plots treated with Ronstar followed by Xonerate + Roundup had similar tropical signalgrass cover to the non-treated by September.

All other programs tested provided similar control regardless of pre-emergence herbicide program used. Seashore paspalum cover averaged 46 percent in the non-treated plots in late September. All programs tested, except Ronstar followed by Xonerate + Roundup Pro, released seashore paspalum greater than the non-treated in September, averaging 73 percent cover. Verticutting made no difference in tropical signalgrass infestations or paspalum release.

The two paspalum golf courses had significantly different levels of initial tropical signalgrass infestations. The use of Xonerate with a low rate of Roundup Pro improved control of heavy infestations at The Oaks Club compared to Xonerate alone. The use of Roundup Pro with Xonerate was unnecessary at Pasadena Yacht and Country Club since Xonerate alone provided comparable control.

The only program that controlled tropical signalgrass and released seashore paspalum at both locations was Dimension followed by Specticle Flo twice followed by Xonerate twice. Other programs evaluated with different pre-emergence herbicides or

Xonerate + Roundup were effective at one of two locations or did not release paspalum greater than the non-treated. Verticutting gave temporary, but inconsistent, additive control of tropical signalgrass and was ineffective in preventing regrowth or enhancing turfgrass release.

One of the biggest limitations to tropical signalgrass control in summer is the maximum labeled use rates of herbicides with selectivity in seashore paspalum. Xonerate is capped at a total of 29 fl. oz./acre per year and superintendents should appreciate these limitations before planning treatments in seashore paspalum.

Delaying applications until fall or developing annual programs that include sequential treatments for spring, summer and fall will be critical for long-term control of tropical signalgrass. Current research is focusing on combining the best programs from the work in 2020 to improve our prescriptive recommendations for paspalum managers.

Special thanks to Nick Kearns and Scott MacEwen for the supporting these projects. We would also like to acknowledge the staff at The Oaks Club and Pasadena Yacht and Country Club for technical assistance and plot maintenance. Thanks also to Jennifer Bryan, Andy Neiswender, and the Florida GCSA for supporting this work. ■



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New Weed Scientist Arrival is MUSIC TO SUPERINTENDENT EARS

Florida's new weed scientist, Dr. Pawel Petelewicz, might not play golf but he does play guitar and hopes to cobble together a garage band once he settles into Gainesville. Petelewicz had such a band in his native Poland before making his first trip to the U.S. in 2015 for post-graduate work with Dr. Jim Baird at the University of California – Riverside.

"I loved to get together and create some music. That is my main hobby," Petelewicz says. By contrast, his qualifications as a golfer run no closer than "almost being hit by a ball." But it is what he can do "with a microscope" on behalf of the golf and turfgrass industries that has people excited.

Announcing the hire, UF's vice president for agriculture and natural resources, Scott Angle, described how the past five years on Baird's team and in his lab helped prepare Petelewicz for the job.

"The lab is an industry-driven operation, a lean and nimble team



Dr. Pawel Petelewicz

hustling to deliver solutions, striving to keep one step ahead of weeds' adaptations to treatments, not only trying every tool in the box but combining tools to give longer life to the products you're already familiar with," Angle wrote.

"When you're part of a team like that, you develop a service ethic that's as critical as scientific chops. So, it was no surprise that Florida golf course superintendents and chemical company reps started getting calls from Pawel before he even interviewed for the job. That impressed Kevin Kenworthy, who led the search and who says Pawel's job at UF/IFAS is to build the top turf weed science program in the nation."

Petelewicz arrived in Florida in February but won't be able to take up UF duties – likely in April - when his contract with UCR expires. It was only the second time he'd set foot in the state after a visit to the Golf Industry Show in Orlando in 2020. Because of the pandemic, which kicked in soon after that event, his entire hiring process was performed online.

Dr. Pawel Petelewicz in action during a field day in California. The familiar face behind him is Dr. Marco Schiavon, who also came to UF from Dr. Jim Baird's team at UC – Riverside.



"There were interviews and Zoom meetings all day long," he says, without complaint. "I mean it's going to be like that. It is the 21st century, right? The pandemic expedited things but honestly, it had to happen...I'm waiting for teleports!"

Over his time in California, Petelewicz traveled up and down the state, working with all kinds of facilities including The Olympic Club in San Francisco and Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles. He also was a regular presence on Palm Desert courses. "Wherever we needed to go to sort out some troubles, we've been there," he says. "For these four years I have conducted studies at more than 20 different individual locations – golf courses and sod farms - scattered across the whole state of California.

"As a researcher I also became very conscious of the game's impact on this specific crop setting, thus the management solutions needed. While visiting golf courses I have always tried to be receptive of superintendents' point of view and even though I haven't played myself, I am aware of the importance of the strictly athletic and game related aspect of turfgrass management."

There is no formal college-level program focused solely on turfgrass in Poland, so Petelewicz's degrees are in horticulture and he received training encompassing a variety of crops. His Ph.D. research focused on aspects related to nursery production and rhizogenesis. In 2015, his principal investigator visited his office and told him he was heading to the U.S. for post-graduate work with Dr. Baird. "You can't say no to such an offer," he laughs.

Working as a lab assistant in Riverside for six months, his interests shifted. "Dr. Baird likes to say he turned me to the dark side," Petelewicz says. "At end of my stay, I came to conclusion that I really enjoyed working with the turfgrass industry and decided that I'd like to pursue research in this area. I went back to Poland to submit my thesis and get my degree. I came back as soon as I received it."

As a post-doctoral researcher, Petelewicz was responsible for the majority of pest management related studies in the Baird program. "Since March 2017, I've been exposed to a tremendous amount of research in the areas of weed management, disease management but also cultural practices," he says. "My work addressed numerous issues and problems with the respect to a vast variety of environmental conditions and turfgrass settings."

Petelewicz, 33, starts his new position with access to an industry supported operating reserve which includes a grant of \$20,000 over two years from the Florida GCSA. His wife, Magdalena, has degrees in sociology and journalism.

"Gainesville seems like such a lovely place, and we also love the environment and nature here," Petelewicz says. "We were here not even for a week, but we could see it is totally different from California. People are more open and friendly. It might be a chance to seek some company to play some music together." ■

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Single rider golf carts have reduced round times but increased wear and tear on the terrain golf course superintendents maintain.

The Pandemic Boosted Play AND LIKELY WORKLOADS TOO

by Kyle Sweet, CGCS

Without a doubt you’ve all been busy in 2021, no matter what aspect of the golf business you’re in. It’s hard for me to believe that even our secluded private club at the north end of an island is hosting 150 to 200 golfers per day. Members that usually play twice a week are playing four or five times a week and driving their own cart as well. Yes, four cart foursomes are here and who knows, maybe they are here to stay.

I’m willing to bet that some will pay a premium to have their own cart, yes this could be interesting. Four carts are providing faster golf, easily trimming off 45 minutes from a round here and I would suspect about the same at your track. More golfers, faster golf, long days and continued restrictions in our society due to the pandemic have really been good for golf.

I have to ask the question though, has it been good to you?

Let’s face it, what we do takes time and money and theoretically the more that we have, the better job we can do for our facilities. Whether you’re at a private club or public, your value and the value of what your team is doing should be appreciated and celebrated and you, my friend, should not let this chance slip by.

Let’s put your value front and center. Did you cover for a lack of staff during the height of the pandemic? Did you defer some needed work on the course or maybe some needed work on yourself, which, yeah, that’s important too? Did your staff members have hours reduced, forcing them to find additional work while you worked to keep up their morale? Was your family affected because you had to adjust your schedule, work varied hours and still provide a great product? Did you defer taking your earned time off?

I guess I could go on and on. But what I’m getting at, is that you were up against a lot, and after all of that, you may be hosting one of the busiest seasons in your club’s history. That golf course isn’t happening without you, your team, your dedication and your experience. You’ve adapted, you’ve persevered and you’re getting ready for another summer as we speak, which is when we really get to work.

We superintendents and assistants, we’re cut from the same cloth. We get out there, get the work done and then often get outta the way. That’s great but we should also make ourselves visible when and where we need to be.

Do you have an online tee sheet? If you have access to it, find out who’s playing and make an appointment, so to speak, out on the course. It’s easy and it’s in your environment. A quick “Hello, how’s the course” can be an opportunity to brag about your staff, and can make a big impact on that person.

Be active in communicating through social media and other outlets like your club newsletter. Personally, I don’t participate in any social media, but I write a mean newsletter article that is a solid two pages of text and images.

Work well with others. It takes a great team to make a successful club work and by communicating well and helping to create an environment of solid teamwork across the facility, you’re helping everyone succeed. By working well with other departments, you are also making yourself known to them and the customers and members that they directly work with.

Increasing your skill set and increasing your growth will ultimately increase your value. I’m not talking about just going to a seminar a couple times a year or taking an online class or two for work. I’m talking about making some changes for yourself. Have you wanted to be a better public speaker? Have you wanted to learn an instrument? Is there some hobby that you would like to take to the next level? Heck, are you wishing that you and your spouse could make a date night once a week? Are these things important or is green speed and goosegrass control more important to you?

Yeah, I get it. It’s uncomfortable to do something for yourself but no one is going to do it for you. Growth requires you to be uncomfortable, whether personal or professional. I challenge you to get out of your comfort zone and grow yourself. I’m going to go out on a limb and say that if you work on yourself and succeed, your work for others will be even more effective and rewarding.

Review your routines. Is there valuable time that you are just throwing away every day or some routine that just isn’t in line with who you see yourself as? Is there one thing that you can change or eliminate?

I remember a routine of medium coffee with sugar and cream and a coffee roll each morning that led me to a six-inch waist increase and the need to lose 30 pounds. I fortunately dropped that routine, swapping for a healthy breakfast and a daily stop at the gym.

The most successful people in the world are crazy about their routines. Very little can get in their way and those around them often gain admiration for their commitment and work towards creating effective routines of their own.

Listen, listen and learn. Listen more and learn. I’m sure that several of you are tuned into podcasts and presentations in lieu of morning music. I wish I had learned this a long time ago. Taking the time to listen and learn from those more insightful and experienced than myself has been invigorating. I recommend it. There are no shortages of motivational speakers and successful business leaders online willing to share their nuggets for success.

Tune in and take it in.

Okay, back to that value thing. You are valuable to your employer, maybe more valuable than you know and you should be promoting that value to your customers and employer every day.

Hopefully, with the increase in golf these days, you’ll be provided with more resources to be even more successful and increase your value even more. Do me and yourself a favor though, take your personal value seriously and grow. Get out of your comfort zone, choose to be uncomfortable.

Review the effectiveness of your routines and lastly, listen, listen and learn from the vast resources out there. There are countless successful people willing to motivate and share their experiences to help make you - who, by the way, are one of a kind - be the best you can be. ■

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IN THE NEWS

Excerpts from press coverage on people in the world of golf course maintenance in Florida.

Jay Buccellato

Legends Golf and Country Club

Spectrum News 13, January 29

Homeowners in a Clermont community are excited to see better views from their backyards and are hopeful that could translate into increased property values. The Legends Golf Course closed in 2018, but now is scheduled to reopen later this year ... homeowner and Home Owners Association president Patrick Maloney can see the potential. "We are redoing all the greens," he said, pointing at the course.

In addition to putting up three quarters of a million dollars for the course itself, the HOA is committing nearly another \$2 million dollars to get the golf course back in playable shape. "It's a lot of work," golf course superintendent Jay Buccellato said. "We had to kill all the old stuff that was here and prep it so can be retooled, reshaped, and regressed."

"A golf course gives us the ability to cut the grass, make it look good, take care of all the other issues that go along with it, like the storm water," Maloney said. "Get the golfers in here to make some money."



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Terry Kennelly

The Concession Golf Club

Bradenton Herald, February 26

It was three days before Christmas 2020 when PGA Tour officials arrived in Bradenton to survey The Concession Golf Club as a candidate to replace Mexico's Club de Golf Chapultepec as a temporary host of this year's World Golf Championship tournament.

Concession golf course superintendent Terry Kennelly, though, didn't wait for the PGA Tour to officially award the East Manatee County private club hosting duties. He began formulating a plan on how to make The Concession up to PGA Tour-quality, which included a meeting with Concession president Bruce Cassidy.

"I said, 'We need to act like we're going to get it,'" Kennelly said. "Because with the short notice, we can't sit and wait until it's official. And I gave him basically my game plan of what I thought we needed to do and then we just started going."

By the time the tournament was officially relocating for one year to The Concession, Kennelly, his staff of 25, when including himself, and 35 volunteers had 45 days to prepare the course up to PGA Tour standards.

"I gave my owner 50/50 odds we could pull it off," Kennelly said. "If you had told me 30 days ago this is what we would have had, I wouldn't have believed you." ... And what he has is a golf course that golf's best players have raved about this week.

Terry Kennelly

The Concession Golf Club

Bradenton Herald, February 25

As golfers put their last-minute preparations in for this week's World Golf Championships: Workday Championship at The Concession in East Manatee County on Wednesday, most of the attention was centered on the sport's biggest draw over the past three decades: Tiger Woods.

...Meanwhile, when Thursday's first round begins, the top players in the world take aim on a challenging golf course, which stepped up to take on the tournament on a one-year interim basis from Mexico City due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"In the '70s when I was kind of cutting my teeth, there were plenty of good courses around here, but the greens were never Tour quality," former major winner and Bradenton resident Paul Azinger said at a pre-tournament press conference two weeks ago. "It really wasn't until Bruce [Cassidy] built The Concession and brought the superintendent, Terry Kennelly, in here that I started to believe that this region could really produce killer greens. There were a couple courses in the area that could get their greens kind of fast, but this really set the standard I think for the area and all the superintendents."

The Late Danny Aylwin

Daytona Beach News-Journal, February 4

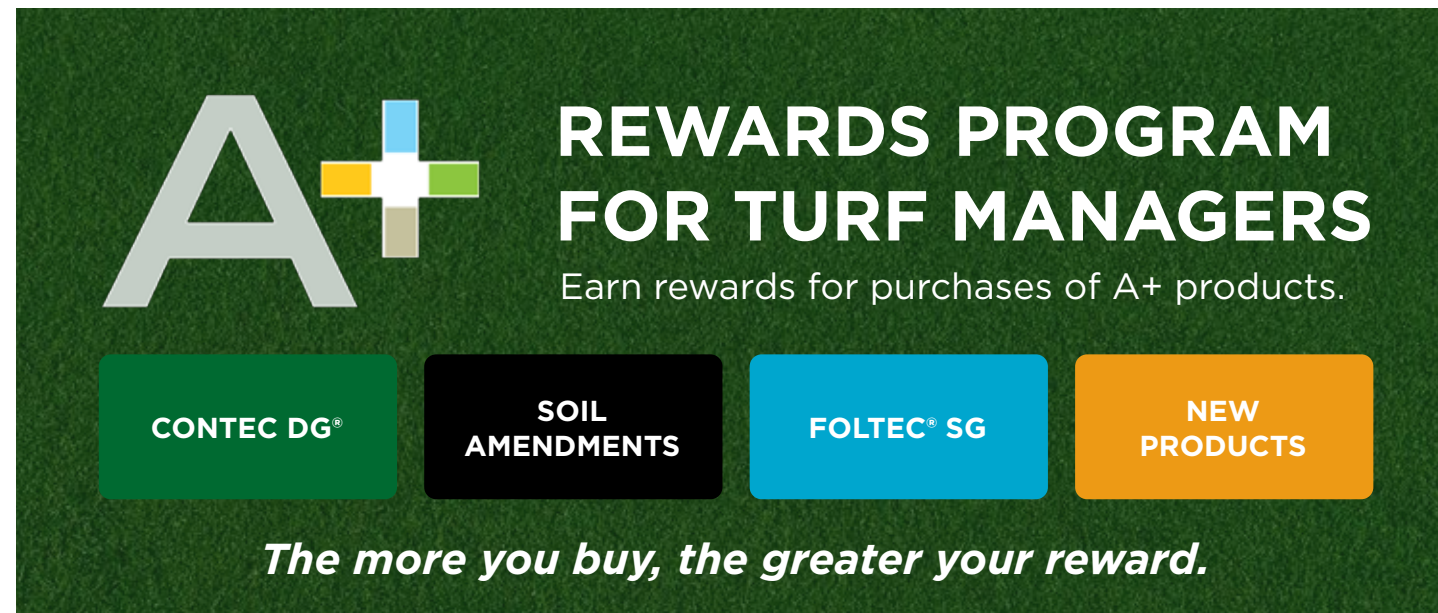
The Florida Professional Golf Tour makes its annual stop in New Smyrna Beach this weekend for the 55th annual Indian River Open. A Friday pro-am will be followed by the 36-hole tournament on the city's par-72 municipal layout.

NSB Golf Club's head professional, Gary Wintz, said this week that the 2021 tournament will be played in honor of longtime local superintendent Danny Aylwin, who died earlier this week. Aylwin grew up playing the NSB course and began his superintendent career at the course.

Jeff Von Eschen

Duran Golf Club, Viera Voice, April 21

Jeff Von Eschen recently was promoted to general manager of Duran Golf Club. Last year, Von Eschen, who has been with Duran Golf Club for 17 years, was promoted to senior manager of club operations. Before that, Von Eschen had been golf course superintendent and assistant golf course superintendent.



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Brandon Richey's Tweet with a couple of recognizable faces on February 18 generated considerable attention. There he was standing between PGA Tour stars Ian Poulter and Graeme McDowell with them both pointing at his smiling face on the cover of The Florida Green.

Richey's Tweet read: "Special thanks to @FGCSA and everyone involved with The Florida Green for their consideration to be featured in the winter 2021 issue, amongst so many deserving individuals in our industry. It has given me the chance to expose our association to some of my favorites..."

The Tweet generated nearly 200 likes and prompted McDowell, the 2010 U.S. Open winner, to send out his own message about the moment and what he thinks of Richey's contribution at Lake Nona: "Proud of what you have achieved at @LakeNonaGCC, brother. When passion and talent come together in any line of business, great things happen."

Poulter and McDowell are members at Lake Nona and when Richey asked a rare favor on the course one day they were happy to oblige, with one of their caddies taking the photo.



PGA Tour stars Ian Poulter, left, and Graeme McDowell, right, with Brandon Richey and his cover story in the middle.

Everglades and Palm Beach Give to GCSAA Programs

The Everglades GCSA and Palm Beach GCSA recently donated in support of the Environmental Institute for Golf. The Everglades GCSA donated \$5,000 to EIFG and the Palm Beach GCSA donated \$2,500 to each of the EIFG and First Green, GCSAA's STEM-education program.

With their donations, both chapters renewed their Platinum Tee Club status which recognizes organizations that give \$5,000 or more annually to the EIFG. Both are also recognized in the Presidential Club giving level of the EIFG's cumulative giving program. The Presidential Club recognizes donors who have given between \$100,000 and \$249,999 since 1987.

The Everglades GCSA was founded in 1968 and the Palm Beach GCSA in 1978.

"The Everglades GCSA is delighted to help fund the EIFG each year. The chapter values the hard work of golf course superintendents who try to balance turfgrass management and environmental sustainability," Everglades GCSA president, Cisco Navas, from Cypress Woods Golf and Country Club, says. "It is important that the EIFG has assistance to continue their efforts of research, education, and advocacy."

Palm Beach GCSA president, Ryan Swilley, from Gulf Stream Golf Club, says, "The Palm Beach GCSA is delighted to provide funding to the EIFG and First Green. The donation brings our mission to life by helping support the profession when students attending First Green events learn about golf course management and environmental stewardship. Environmental protection is supported through new research and education when the EIFG continues to receive the resources necessary."

Florida GCSA Members Hit Certification Marks

The Florida GCSA congratulates Patrick "P.J." Salter on earning the title of certified golf course superintendent from GCSAA recently. Tim Cann, CGCS, from Harbour Ridge Yacht and Country Club, and Sean O'Brien, CGCS from The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club at Grande Lakes, also renewed their certification recently.

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Mark Kann Joins Sod Solutions

Sod Solutions welcomes Mark Kann as Florida territory manager. Kann, who started his new position in February, brings over 25 years of experience in the turfgrass industry. For the past 14 years, he ran the turf research facility for the University of Florida (UF) Plant Science Research and Education Unit in Citra. He was Florida GCSA president in 2011-12.



Mark Kann

“Mark Kann brings both an extensive professional background and impressive educational credentials into his new role within the Florida turfgrass market. He has clearly demonstrated his interest and expertise to work with producers throughout the region as a sod professional and will be a resource for Sod Solutions. We are excited to welcome Mark as our new Florida Territory Manager,” said Tobey Wagner, president of Sod Solutions.

Kann holds a bachelor’s degree in turfgrass science and a master’s

degree in horticulture sciences from UF. In his master’s program, Kann minored in agricultural education and communication and agronomy, with a research focus on evaluating educational programs.

During his time as coordinator of research programs at the UF Plant Science Research and Educational Unit, Kann managed numerous research projects involving turfgrass, ornamentals and greenhouse production.

“When I moved to Florida 25 years ago, I wanted a job on a golf course so I could play free golf. I started working in golf course maintenance and quickly moved up from raking bunkers to becoming a pesticide technician within a couple of years,” Kann says. “It was an exciting time for golf with Tiger Woods preparing to join the PGA, but also the beginning of environmentalists questioning the negative environmental impacts of golf course maintenance.”

In addition to serving the Florida GCSA board of directors, Kann also served the board of the Florida Turfgrass Association and Seven Rivers GCSA, including a term president. He was a longtime chair of the Florida GCSA education and BMP committee and played an integral role in helping create the Florida Golf BMP Certification Program.

Melrose Academy Sends Tingen to GIS Twice

Congratulations to Hobe Sound Golf Club’s Clinton Tingen on earning a scholarship from the Melrose Leadership Academy to participate in the 2021 and 2022 Golf Industry Shows. The Melrose Leadership Academy supports the professional development of GCSAA-member superintendents.

It is administered through the Environmental Institute for Golf (EIFG), the philanthropic organization of GCSAA. The program was established in 2012 by the late Ken Melrose, former CEO and chairman of the board of The Toro Co., and is supported by a \$1 million gift to the EIFG from the Kendrick B. Melrose Family Foundation.

Academy members are chosen through an application process based on financial need, volunteerism and a drive to advance their careers. The new class will participate in networking and leadership activities, as well as attend a variety of education seminars. Tingen was among 11 superintendents were chosen to be a part of the 2021 Academy.

“With the 2021 GIS being virtual, we didn’t want the Melrose honorees to miss out on a traditional GIS experience, so we are excited that they will be able to attend the 2022 in-person event as well,” GCSAA chief executive officer Rhett Evans says.



Clinton Tingen at Hobe Sound Golf Club.

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PGA Section Honors North Florida's Baur

Anthony Baur, from St. Johns Golf Club in Elkton, was named Superintendent of the Year by the North Florida PGA section. He and other winners will be recognized at the section's annual meeting and celebration of members at Reunion Resort in Kissimmee on June 7. Baur is current president of the North Florida GCSA.



Anthony Baur

Completing a big year for the club, Wes Tucker, from St. Johns was named Professional of the Year. He also received the chapter's Patriot Golf Leader Award, presented to a PGA professional who demonstrates a commitment to veterans and active-duty personnel, and was named the merchandiser of the year for public golf courses.

Weyandt Earns Award With Use of Twitter

Craig Weyandt, from The Moorings Club at Hawks Nest in Vero Beach, has been recognized by Golf Course Industry magazine and Aquatrols for his work on Twitter. Weyandt, who served as Florida GCSA president in 2005-07, won in the super social media conservation category for use of Twitter to inform club members about wildlife at the golf course.

"When our club enhanced the website, I thought it would be a great way to communicate with members if I put golf course information on Twitter, and had it load directly to the website," he says. "Now, everything I post on Twitter goes straight to the front page of the clubhouse website. I always try to make it positive, informative and educational."

Weyandt is also a certified Florida master naturalist. "Part of what I've learned through that is how to share Florida flora, fauna and ecology with others. I get to tell members about maintenance and what we're doing on the golf course and also about the wildlife out there as well."

Navas, from Cypress Woods Golf and Country Club, says. "It is important that the EIFG has assistance to continue their efforts of research, education, and advocacy."



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Welcome New Members

The Florida GCSA welcomes the following new and returning members to the association:

- Eric Amend, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Avila Golf and Country Club, Tampa
- Aaron Barnett, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, Grey Oaks Country Club, Naples
- Benoit Beaulne, Class C,** Second assistant-spray technician, Quail Ridge Country Club, Boynton Beach
- Jeremy Becker, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Gulf Stream Golf Club, Delray Beach
- Tara Breder, Affiliate,** Solar energy consultant, Spreck Energy
- Tyler Brown, Class B,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Heritage Palms Golf & Country Club, Fort Myers
- Grant Carque, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, The Club at Ibis, West Palm Beach
- Kieran Collen, Affiliate,** Director, Turf Aid, Nokomis
- Dylan DeGroot, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Fiddlesticks Country Club, Fort Myers
- Joshua Dunn, Class A,** Golf course superintendent, The Villages, The Villages

- Jeffrey Gall, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, The Forest Country Club, Fort Myers
- Nicolas Garibay, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, North Port
- Justin Gille, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, The Country Club at Mirasol, Palm Beach Gardens
- Taylor Griffin, Class C,** Second assistant golf course superintendent, Old Marsh Golf Club, Palm Beach Gardens
- George Hansell, Class B,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Jacksonville Golf & Country Club, Jacksonville
- Thomas Hilferty, Class A,** Golf course superintendent, Tatum Ridge Golf Links, Sarasota
- Donald Johnson, Class A,** Director of golf operations, Cuisinart Golf Club, The Valley
- Donnie Jones, Class C,** Second assistant golf course superintendent, Ruskin
- Brad King, Affiliate,** Territory sales manager, E-Z-GO Division of Textron
- Matthew King, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, The Forest Country Club, Fort Myers

- Brandon Koester, Class C,** Spray technician, Colonial Country Club, Fort Myers
- Brigido Miguel, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Olde Hickory Golf and Country Club, Fort Myers
- Robert Mulhare, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, Boca West Country Club, Boca Raton
- Sullivan Murphy, Class C,** Golf course superintendent, Quail Ridge Country Club, Boynton Beach
- Kevin Murray, Affiliate,** Environmental consultant, Lake & Wetland Management - Treasure Coast, Stuart
- Orrin Nilsson, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, Plantation Golf and Country Club, Venice
- Geoffrey Pollock, Affiliate,** Material sales manager, Garcia Mining, Clewiston
- Amber Schwab, Affiliate,** Vice-president, Straw America, Lake City
- Daniel Shaddix, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, The Villages, The Villages
- Stephen Shea, Affiliate,** Owner/president, Aeration Technology, Naples
- John Stach, Class A,** Golf course superintendent, Misty Creek Golf Club, Sarasota
- Andrew Stair, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Orchid Island Golf and Beach Club, Vero Beach
- Shaun Thomas, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, BallenIsles Country Club, Palm Beach Gardens
- Michael Thornton, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, Aquarina Country Club, Melbourne Beach
- Kenneth Vierling, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, The Forest Country Club, Fort Myers
- Tyna Wauffull, Student,** Spray technician, On Top of The World, Ocala
- Jared Webber, Class B,** Golf course superintendent - Lakes Course, Bear Lakes Country Club, West Palm Beach
- Bill Wiggins Sr., Class C,** Bonita National Golf and Country Club, Bonita Springs
- Reed Williams, Affiliate,** Territory sales manager – Tampa-Orlando, Cushman/Textron, Augusta
- Statom Willis, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Hunters Run Golf & Racquet Club, Cape Coral
- Matthew Wise, Class B,** Golf course superintendent, Lost Tree Club, North Palm Beach
- Brian Woods, Class C,** Assistant golf course superintendent, Olde Florida Golf Club, Naples

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GIS 2021: A New Twist Turns Out a Winner

As the first quarter of 2021 is about to conclude, I want to take a moment and reflect on the recent completion of this year's Golf Industry Show and some of the lessons we learned. GCSAA's team put forth extraordinary effort to pivot from our traditional in-person conference and show to one delivered on a virtual platform.



Ralph Dain, CGCS

The team at headquarters put in long hours as a new path had to be cut through unfamiliar territory. These efforts culminated in a Golf Industry Show that delivered unparalleled educational opportunities, while continuing to connect the more than 9,500 attendees with exhibitors and industry leaders. The live feeds from Lawrence, KS provided attendees unprecedented access to headquarters, as well as a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Golf Industry Show.

These live feeds with president, John Fulling, CGCS, chief executive officer, Rhett Evans, and host, Lauren Thompson, seemed to be a big hit with our members, as was the opening ceremony with fan favorite, Jim Nance, receiving the Old Tom Morris Award. The traditional elements of the Golf Industry Show were present even though the format was unconventional.

The popular facility package option allowed for all interested individuals at a golf course to partake in the events and education provided, not only during the actual days of the conference, but for up to 30 days afterwards.

We delivered 88 educational sessions with participants engaging in 46,900 session views by the time the on-demand portion ended. We had over 200 exhibitors take part in the trade show



who connected with individuals in nearly 230,000 booth visits by the conclusion of the show on March 6.

As far as takeaways from this year's Golf Industry Show, we learned through resiliency in times of challenge, we can still provide a top-quality educational conference and industry trade show. I believe the virtual platform allows us to reach individuals who would not typically travel to a physical trade show. I have also heard from numerous members that although the show this year provided the meat and potatoes of a typical year, there is still something to be gained by in-person interactions.

Based on these observations, in my humble opinion, I believe there is a place for both the virtual element and the traditional in-person conference and show. I know that we now have the experience gained by preparing for the 2021 Golf Industry Show, and that these lessons could easily be put to work in hosting a hybrid show. Still, these decisions are made well above my pay grade and there are a number of factors of which I may not be aware.

Suffice it to say, I feel like we at GCSAA did everything possible to continue to provide the best education and networking possible for all those who participated in the virtual Golf Industry Show. I know we have gained valuable experience through our efforts and we will be increasingly nimble in our preparations for future shows.

I will close with saying, I hope to "see" you in San Diego next February, and I too am excited to see where the lessons from 2020 take us in regard to new directions for the Golf Industry Show. ■

- Ralph Dain is GCSAA regional representative in Florida. You can reach him at (785) 424-4306 or rdain@gcsaa.org.



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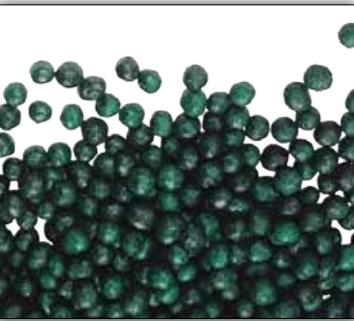
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