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ON THE COVER:

Bryce Gibson is a long way from the New York state dairy farm he grew up on but he's right at home in the golf course superintendent profession at Interlachen Country Club.

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Make Time to Take Time To Invest in Your Health

With the holiday season now behind us, I hope each one of you was able to take some time off and have a relaxing time away from work. And for those of you that didn't, I have to ask, "Why not?" I know, we as superintendents tend to get caught up in so much of the daily operation that, for some of us, it's sometimes hard to justify time away from the office, or even allow our own staff the same pleasure.

I often hear about superintendents who work 60 to 70 hours a week for three or four weeks straight. Tournaments, aerification and special projects can be stressful times, and our presence is greatly needed. We all run a tight ship and being without the captain for even one day could spell trouble. Or would it?

Florida GCSA past-president, and now GCSAA secretary-treasurer, Kevin Sunderman, CGCS gave an excellent presentation at the Seven Rivers GCSA meeting last fall about the importance of building your team around you. His message was about educating, training and investing in your employees to make the team the best it can be while also increasing their value to keep them from hunting for another job.

But it was more than just employment and building your team up, it was about delegating tasks and trusting them to get the job done in your absence, something that can be healthy for everybody.

Time away from work can help reenergize and motivate someone and keep them from getting bored and burnt out. It can also help reduce missed days and call-in's by allowing time to do what can't be done during the normal work week. Employees that are left in charge take better ownership of the operation that carries over into their work.

Now is a great time to slow down a bit. The busy golfing season means we can't do much else on the course, and summertime cultural practices and renovations haven't ramped up yet. Perhaps take a long weekend for Valentine's Day with your significant other, or enjoy a week-long spring break with the family. Take a few days off to get some items knocked off that never ending "honey-do" list. Or, one of my favorites, head out on a boat and catch a few fish. And as a bonus - once you're about five miles off-shore you lose cell service!

It could also be as simple as attending a chapter meeting and enjoying a round of golf - something I've found even less stressful than sitting at home or travelling on vacation. Chapter meetings are also a great way for superintendents and assistants to connect with peers and meet new ones, while keeping up to date on education and practices. In fact, I've never attended a chapter meeting where I haven't learned something. Chapter meetings are also a great way for you to reward that star crew member that loves hitting the links as much as you do. It's a day away from it all and a chance to reconnect.

Our jobs are often stressful. And sometimes to the point that it can interfere with our own personal physical and mental health. We often overlook troublesome signs that can lead to major health issues down the road because we are too busy working to take care of it. This industry is our life, and we dedicate so much to it that we forget about our family and ourselves. I hope at a minimum that you take some time off for your own wellbeing so that you can return to work and to the family and friends you have made along the way. Nothing at work is so important that it can't be done tomorrow.

I hope this advice hits home, and over the next few months that you take some time away and enjoy it! After all, you've earned it.

- Andy Jorgensen, CGCS



Andy Jorgensen, CGCS



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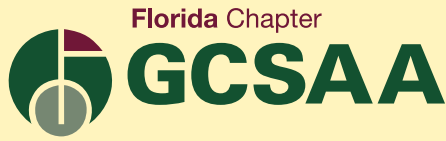


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Lots to Look Forward to Starting with California

A sign that life is, or at least was, slowly returning to normal was evident in November when I made my way to the GCSAA Chapter Leader Symposium in Lawrence, KS. Though, who knows where we will stand with the virus by the time you're reading this. As I write, cases are on a steep rise. The annual symposium typically takes place in March, but due to a postponement in 2020, it was moved to November.

Not only did it feel good to get on a plane and travel again, attending this symposium provided me an opportunity to reconnect with other chapter executives from across the country, strengthen my relationship with GCSAA leaders and staff, and learn. Just as superintendents feel comfortable talking shop with other superintendents, it can be energizing for me to talk with others who do what I do.

GCSAA wants to see all affiliated chapters succeed and through events like this we discover new tools to help our members and be better leaders. I always come back to Florida with something worth trying or tweaking. GCSAA certainly presents great information but just like superintendents can learn as much in a conversation before or after a seminar, some of the best stuff comes outside the formal sessions.

So, it was great to gather with my peers in the industry to hear their successes, ideas for improvement and innovative approaches. I feel grateful for the opportunity, and I look forward to seeing everyone again in San Diego, CA at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in February.

As part of this year's Show, the Florida GCSA has entered a Florida GCSA team for the Health in Action 5K. This run takes place at 7.30am on Wednesday, February 9 at Marriott Marquis on the Embarcadero site. If you are interested in joining the team; please sign up at gcsaconference.com/events/5k and choose the Florida GCSA team at checkout. We will have specially made t-shirts for all in-person participants.

In addition, the Florida GCSA will host our annual reception at Tin Roof that night from 7pm to 10 pm. The venue is a little different than some of the places we've

been to in the past but hopefully the relaxed atmosphere will be conducive to great fun and fellowship. Our new president, Andy Jorgensen, CGCS visited there when the show was last in San Diego and it has his stamp of approval.

To attend, you must RSVP or, if you are an affiliate member, through sponsoring the event. All the information can be found on our website under the calendar of events. If you still have questions, you can always contact me at the Florida GCSA office, fgcsa@comcast.net or (772) 334-7515.

In January, the Florida GCSA board of directors will meet twice; once for the winter board meeting and then for a strategic planning session with GCSAA representatives, Ralph Dain and Steve Randall. Like the Chapter Leader Symposium I attended in Lawrence, the planning session will focus on identifying areas for improvement and change, recommending new chapter goals, and finding innovative ways we can grow as an association.

As we move into 2022, your association will continue its work to identify areas of weakness and strength and act upon those areas to better serve you, and to provide you, our members, the services that matter most. I look forward to seeing everyone in San Diego this February at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show. Hopefully the virus will be well on the way down by then. ■

- Jennifer Bryan, Executive Director



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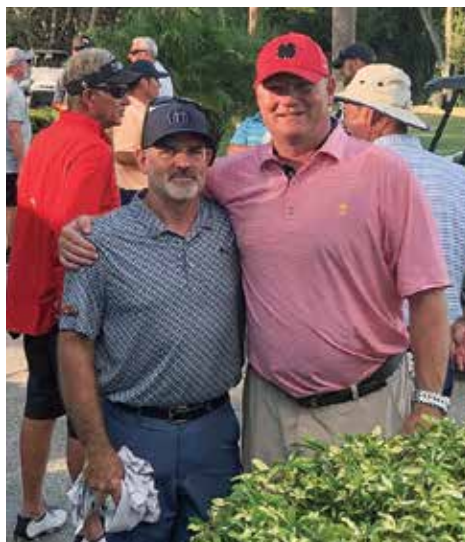
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FLORIDA WEST COAST



Scott Halbach, of Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranch in Safety Harbor, accepts a check for \$2,000 from Todd Six on behalf of the Florida West Coast GCSA.



Keith Lamb and John Scott catch up before play at Innisbrook.

The Florida West Coast GCSA held the annual Research and Benefit Golf Tournament at Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club in October. The morning began with education on facility BMPs provided by Dr. Bryan Unruh, of the University of Florida, via Zoom. Cassidy Hampton, from the Southwest Florida Water Management District, offered great insight into measures and opportunities the water district provides.

Afternoon golf was again played on the famous Copperhead course with more than 90 players. Head golf course superintendent Ryan Stewart and his fine staff had the Copperhead in fabulous condition. Over \$5,000 was raised for research and benevolence assistance. Thank you to our great sponsors and to all at Innisbrook Resort for providing another stellar event.



Equipment managers meet at Avila Golf and Country Club.

The low four-man teams were Nick Kearns, Jason Frank, Max Rudder and Richard Colyer with a gross 58 and net 54. Greg McClimans, Brent Montzka, Harrison McClimans and Gregory McClimans also returned a gross 58 for a net score of 56.

Avila Golf and Country Club hosted our equipment managers meeting on November 11.

Superintendent Andrew Collier and equipment manager Doug Johnson produced a fantastic event. Avila Country Golf and Country Club provided a magnificent lunch for the group.



Part of the crowd at the meet and greet at Thomas P's.

Wesco Turf's Steve Hodgkinson spoke on standard operating procedure management and Ken "K.J." Skel offered equipment tips. This event also served as an opportunity to wish K.J. all the best on his retirement. Special thanks to everyone Avila Golf and Country Club.

Our Christmas holiday charity for kids event was a meet and greet at Thomas P's. Dozens of toys were donated and over \$1,000 was raised for kids charity and a great time was had by all.

Congratulations to Tony Taylor, CGCS for having the winning 50/50 raffle ticket.

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A tremendous thank you to everyone who attended and donated time, toys and dollars for charity.

- Todd Six, *On Top of the World*

PALM BEACH

The past year just flew by. The holiday season was on us quickly and golf is once again in full swing down in South Florida. We hope all of our members, vendors and their families enjoyed a happy and healthy holiday season and have a prosperous new year.

Our annual Toys for Tots event at Wellington National Golf Club was a huge success thanks to everyone that participated. We would like to extend our gratitude to Neil Larson and the entire staff for hosting the special event. We had 61 members registered to play in the tournament, and we were able to collect more than 100 toys. In addition to our annual toy donation, a monetary donation was also made for the kids.

We would like to thank our vendors for their continued support. A special thank you to our beverage cart sponsors: Advanced Aquatics, Allstate Resource Management, Golf Agronomics and ProPlus. We would also like to thank Harrell's, our closest to the pin sponsor for this event.

Neil Larson and his team did a great job preparing the course for a day of camaraderie and fun. The course was in excellent condition and the golf format was a two-man scramble.

Congratulations to our winners:

Gross

- 1 - Travis Heater and Jim McDonald
- 2 - Declan Freswick and Duane Cyr
- 3 - Brian Birney and Chris Miller

Net

- 1 - John Eberhart and Brian Becker
- 2 - Robert Anderson and Mark Stephens
- 3 - Ralph Dain and Andy Engelbrecht

Closest to the pin

- No. 3 – Brian Becker
No. 7 – John Swaner
No. 13 – Chocky Warriner

No. 16 – Brian Becker

At press time we were looking forward to our Class A, B and C only meeting at Macarthur Golf Club and our 3rd annual symposium, which will take place sometime in the spring. Please note that this will be an in-person event. Stay tuned for more information in the upcoming months.

Looking forward to a spectacular 2022.

- George Kervern, *Palm Beach Country Club*

SUNCOAST

In October, the Suncoast GCSA had our Pro/Super/Vendor/Vendor event hosted by Robbie Boyd at TPC Prestancia. Players tested their skill levels on TPC's Stadium Course which was in fantastic shape. Hats off to everyone at TPC for providing awesome conditions and hosting a great event. Home field advantage played a part as TPC's Stadium Course superintendent, Kelby Langston, and golf professional, Adam Stoutjesdyk, took home the trophy.

The infamous two club and night golf event at Hawks Run was next and this truly is a one-of-a-kind event and fun is surely had by everyone. With Hawks Run undergoing a facelift in 2022, we were excited to get out there and enjoy ourselves as the future of this event is unknown at this point in time.

The Suncoast GCSA would like to thank everyone who made it out to this event as all proceeds are donated to our benevolent fund. The event is broken down into two parts, the first nine holes are played using only two clubs. After the front nine, members gather for some delicious barbecue which was donated by Wesco Turf.

As darkness set in the real fun was about to be had. With the course lit up like Clark Griswold's house, players headed out into the darkness with glow sticks leading the way, tunes jamming and the camaraderie at its highest. If you haven't participated in this event or one similar, it truly is amazing seeing lighted golf balls fly through the sky looking like a meteor shower and hearing the hooting and hollering of players throughout the night. The Suncoast GCSA again would like to thank Fred Hemming and Target Specialties for donating the night golf gear.

As 2021 came to a close, we finished off our year with the annual Christmas party at Gasparilla Inn on Boca Grande Island. We would like to thank all of our 2021 sponsors who contributed to the 2021 season and also all of our Suncoast GCSA members. We hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and have a happy New Year. We look forward to seeing everyone out for an event filled 2022.

- Joel Ehrhart, *Plantation Golf and Country Club*



Host superintendent at TPC Prestancia, Robbie Boyd, with tournament winners Kelby Langston and Adam Stoutjesdyk, also from TPC Prestancia, with Dan Haubein, Pelican Point Golf and Country Club.

CHAPTER ROUND UP

NORTH FLORIDA



North Florida GCSA president, Keith Webb, with Butch Singo Award winner Gary James and colleague, Todd Ronske.



Crash Cup winner for 2021, Nathan Carter, from White Oak Conservation, with Keith Webb.



Keith Webb with winner of the vendor division, David Tennant.

Congratulations to Nathan Carter from White Oak Conservation on winning the 2021 Crash Cup at the annual Ron Hill Classic at Amelia Island. He shot a round of 73 after the Saturday morning greeted us with a beautiful sunrise and a brunch buffet of fruit, pastries, eggs, bacon, sausage and other delicious eats. The 11am tee time saw 72 golfers head out to start their round with temperatures in the mid-80s.

Around 6.30pm everyone headed to a reception and dinner where nearly 100 of us enjoyed a few cocktails, appetizers and socializing, followed with a wonderful buffet of prime rib, low Amelia boil and fried chicken along with all the fixings, topped off with funnel cakes and banana pudding.

Ryan Hill thanked everyone for remembering his father, Ron, and expressed how much the tournament and Amelia Island still means to him and his family. A very surprised Gary James was presented the 2021 Butch Singo Award

and Todd Ronske gave us a little history on Gary and his time in the golfing industry.

- Betty Hooten

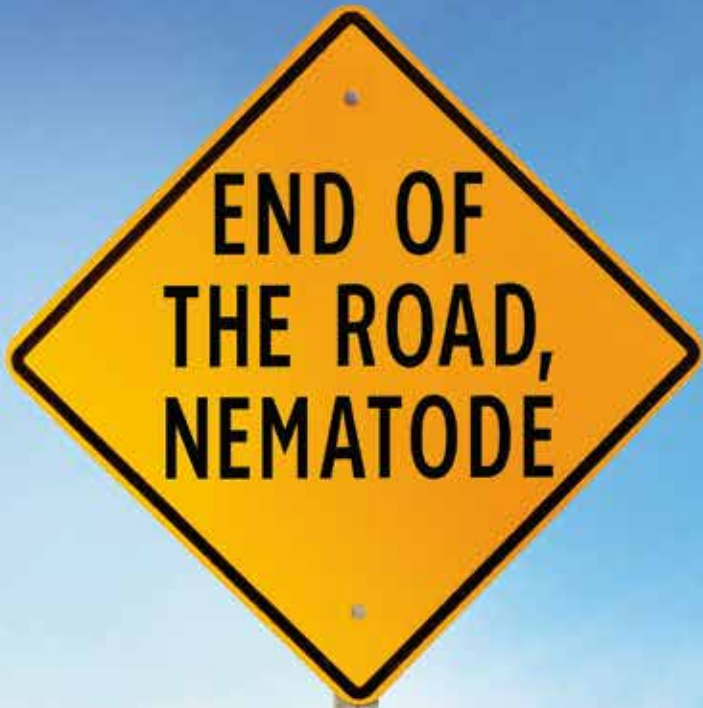
EVERGLADES

What a wild ride 2021 was for all of us. COVID, weather conditions, more golfers, single cart riders, etc. As we put 2021 in the review mirror, we will still deal with challenging and uncomfortable situations regarding your staff and members. Stay safe and healthy.

I would like to thank Scott Ryan and the entire staff at The Club at The Strand for another fantastic Christmas event. We would also like to thank Nick Dwyer, PGA, his team, and the membership for allowing all of us to play their course. The golf course was in great shape, and the reception was exceptional.

At press time, we were getting ready for the G.C. Horn Education Seminar with a great lineup of speakers and CEUs.





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CHAPTER ROUND UP

Other events we have to look forward to include dinner and education at The Club of Pelican Bay on March 23; the spring symposium at Royal Poinciana Golf Club on April 14 and of course, the Poa weekend at Tiburon Golf Club from May 12 to 14. Room registrations for the 2022 Poa Annuu Weekend, hosted by The Ritz-Carlton of Naples and Tiburon, are open.

- Kevin Leo, Quail Creek Country Club

CENTRAL FLORIDA



Crowfoot Open winner Seth Strickland receives his trophy from Chris Zinna.



Crowfoot Open host Scott Scamehorn was a happy winner of the big raffle.



Larry Kamphaus Award winner Pete Clover is congratulated by Chris Zinna, right

Congratulations to Seth Strickland on winning the Crowfoot Open to go with GCSAA's National Championship that he won a few weeks earlier. At press time, Seth was getting ready to defend that title in San Diego, CA.

We had a great field with 112 players taking on the Watson Course at Reunion Resort in Orlando and Seth's one-under par round of 71 was three shots better than runner-up Walter Chavez. Both guys made the trip up from Miami and we appreciate them doing that.

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CHAPTER ROUND UP

Lance Allen and David Robinson won Flight A of the two-man division and Trey Maltby and Mike Gay won Flight B. Winner of the vendor division was Doug Andrade.

Thanks also to our hosts at Reunion Resort, director of golf Scott Scamehorn; superintendent Andy McGuire, golf professional Chris Kalter, and also Victor, Rumoaldo and Francisco for great golf course conditions.

Congratulations also to Pete Clover on receiving the 2021 Larry Kamphaus Award. Pete has been with Wesco Turf for close to 18 years and spent more than a quarter century with Tresca Industries before that. He was a very popular winner.

In other news, we proudly presented \$5,000 to the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children in November and Ed Batcheller has taken the job at Orlando Country Club. We wish him well.

– Lisa McDowell

RIDGE



Ridge GCSA president Dustin Plemmons, left, and GCSAA field representative, Ralph Dain, right, met recently with Congressman Scott Franklin, U.S. representative for Florida's 15th congressional district. They discussed golf's positive economic and environmental contributions to the community.

CALUSA

The Calusa GCSA was proud to brighten the Christmas of some kids in our area thanks to the 8th annual Golf for the Children's Classic at The Verandah Club. We had a great turnout and were able to present the Children's Network of Southwest Florida a check for \$26,520. We really appreciate the support of our members and industry partners. Also, a huge thanks to The Verandah Club and golf course superintendent, Jake Wentz, for hosting us.

After the presentation, the Children's Network of Southwest Florida posted the following along with photos on their Facebook page: "Once again, our partners at the Calusa Golf Course Superintendents Association show their amazing support for the children in need. Through their generosity, youth at our group homes will have an unforgettable Christmas, filled with love, kindness, compassion, food and gifts. Thank you all and God Bless you as you have blessed us."

– John Vuknic, CGCS Stoneybrook Golf Course



Calusa GCSA board members Mark Thomas, Mike Fasy, Kyle Cheek, John Vuknic, Dylan Foster, Eric Oster, Russ Clement and Ben Catlett, with Nadereh Salim, center, from the Children's Network of Southwest Florida and the check for \$26,520.



Mike Sankay, John Vinsand, Nathan Bitter and Ken Kleinder were winners of the golf tournament at The Verandah Club.



Wes Mitchell, Eileen Mitchell, Rich Mulligan and Dale Mitchell represented team GASH.

BMPs Front and Center FOR SPRING SESSION

by Seth McKeel and David Shepp

Last Fall, all eyes were on Tallahassee as the Legislature prepared for the 2022 Legislative Session. Senators and Representatives returned to the Capitol in mid-September and conducted five weeks of committee meetings over the ensuing months, as well as a special session in November to address vaccine and mask mandates.

The committee weeks consisted mainly of defining their agenda for the coming year, receiving state agency reports and initial hearings for filed bills. The big news was that the Capitol is once again open for business to the public.

This year, the Florida GCSA will be front and center, pushing legislation through the process. A bill has been drafted that will memorialize the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Florida's golf courses in Florida Statute.

The goal is to provide public assurance that golf course superintendents are committed to Florida's environment and water quality and receive the training necessary to be good stewards of the land. The proposed legislation would provide for a voluntary,



David Shepp



Seth McKeel

four-year certification, administered by UF/IFAS, along with continuing education requirements for recertification. The benefits of certification include an exemption from additional local testing as well as an exemption from local ordinance regulations relating to water and fertilizer applications.

The sponsors of the legislation are Representative Keith Truenow

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(R, Tavares) and Senator Joe Gruters (R, Sarasota). Representative Truenow is likely a familiar name to most of the members of the Florida GCSA. The founder of a renowned sod farm in central Florida, Rep. Truenow has worked with the industry for decades, supplying many golf courses throughout the state. He was also involved in crafting the best management practices for the Green Industry.

Senator Gruters is a champion for business issues. A CPA from Sarasota, Sen. Gruters has championed state efforts to combat red tide and harmful algal blooms through innovative research and technology, not restrictions, and is a leading advocate in keeping businesses open during the pandemic. In addition to his service in the Senate, Sen. Gruters also serves as chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

As mentioned previously, a major environmental event that highlighted the need for this legislation was the Piney Point spill in Manatee County in late March. The breach in the wall of the abandoned phosphate reservoir pond resulted in more than 200 million gallons of polluted water entering Tampa Bay, leading to heightened media attention and public outcry, and renewed calls for restrictions on all fertilizers and other nutrient sources, primarily at the local level.

While the blackout threat is primarily at the city and county level, we are prepared to defend against any legislative efforts introduced to restrict the use of fertilizers for golf courses during

the upcoming session.

At the local level, Hillsborough County and Orange County continue to work through their proposed ordinances relating to fertilizer blackout periods and watering restrictions. Currently, both proposals maintain exemptions for golf courses that are BMP-certified. The frequency of local ordinance proposals highlights the need for legislative action to provide an exemption for those golf courses that put forth the effort to have their employees trained, and certified, in the best management practices to protect water quality and Florida's natural environment.

Golf course superintendents are stewards of the land and are committed to ensuring the health and safety of their environment.

Planning is underway for the Florida GCSA's Day on the Hill during the 2022 session. The visit to the Capitol will take place the week of February 14. This will be an opportunity for in-person advocacy efforts to support our legislation and discuss other issues arising during the 2022 session. We look forward to seeing everyone in Tallahassee once again.

Thank you for the honor of representing the Florida GCSA. We hope everyone enjoyed a happy, and healthy, holiday season. ■

-Seth McKeel and David Shepp with The Southern Group and lead Florida GCSA government relations efforts

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Four Honored in 2021 ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Clint Smallridge, who helped the Florida GCSA get off the ground in 1978, has been honored with the Florida GCSA President's Award for Lifetime Service. Smallridge was one of four award recipients announced at the end of 2021.

Smallridge was a prominent figure in golf course superintendent circles for many years, serving at Royal Poinciana Golf Club, Banyan Golf Club and Rainbow's End Golf Club, among others. A former owner of Lake Masters, he was president of the Everglades GCSA in 1980-'81 and served on the state association board for many years. He was a member of the committee that led to the formation of the Florida GCSA in 1978.

"Clint is one of those people we all owe a debt of gratitude to," says Florida GCSA and Seven Rivers GCSA president, Andy Jorgensen, CGCS from On Top of the World – Ocala. "He and others like him did so much laying the groundwork for what we enjoy today as an association and also as a profession."

To that latter point, Smallridge was one of several key figures who helped establish the Lake City Community College turf program, which became the gold standard for producing high caliber candidates for the superintendent profession. The program continues today under the auspices of Gateway Community College.

"Although retired, Clint occasionally makes it to a few of our meetings," Jorgensen says. "He was guest speaker at Rainbow's End a few years back and gave us some great insight into the how the course was built and the different techniques that were used back then." (For more, see story page 20.)

Others honored in 2021 included past-president, John Curran, as the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. Curran served a double term in the role following the sudden death of then vice-president, Steve Wright, CGCS. Curran's willingness to take on another year helped provide stability for the association through a critical time.



Billy Gamble IV receives the Florida GCSA Marie Roberts Award from board member, John Vuknic, representing the Calusa GCSA.



Distinguished Service Award winner John Curran.



Joel Jackson Award winner Andy Neiswender.

Another past-president, Andy Neiswender, was also among the winners. Neiswender, from Bellair Country Club, received the Joel Jackson Award for the best superintendent written article to appear in *The Florida Green* over the previous 12 months. Neiswender's report on water quality detailed his experience having to adjust his program at Bellair based on what he learned about the water he was putting out.

The award is named for Joel Jackson, a retired longtime superintendent, former Florida GCSA president, executive director and editor of *The Florida Green*.

Billy Gamble IV, president of Wesco Turf, received the Marie Roberts Lifetime Service Award recognizing participation, support and achievements amounting to a significant contribution to the Florida GCSA and the Florida golf industry. Gamble has been in the industry for 31 years and has been a longtime supporter of chapters and their events across the state for much of that time.

His father, Bill Gamble III, founded Wesco in 1987 when he bought a distribution business called Wesco Zaun from the Toro Company. Its territory covered a swath of Florida, extending from Lakeland to Marco Island.

In 1998, Gamble and his brother, John, purchased another Toro distributorship with locations in Lake Mary and Jacksonville, which extended the company's reach to Sea Island, GA, and west to Tallahassee. For 10 years, the two businesses were connected but operated separately. The companies were consolidated in 2008 to create the current iteration of Wesco Turf. ■



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The Most Curious Superintendent: REFLECTIONS ON CLINT SMALLRIDGE

by Steve Batten

A successful Florida golf course superintendent for many years, Clint Smallridge was in the “information sharing business” long before cell phones or computers. He was always asking questions, observing and trying to figure out what he’d be saying if he were the turf.

He started his career through encouragement of Dr. Granny (Granville) Horn as assistant superintendent at the Kings Inn & Golf Club in the Bahamas. He quickly became superintendent in charge of the Emerald Course as well as superintendent of construction of the Ruby Course.

Dr. Horn was impressed, saying Clint listened to every word he said. Clint found further success when he moved on to Mullet Bay. It was there where he worked closely with architect, Joe Lee, which began a lifetime friendship. Wasn’t long before Clint came back to Florida and eventually became superintendent at prestigious Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples. A job he had for over 14 years during a time when other South Florida superintendents often moved frequently from club to club.

You see, Clint had a special way of communicating with people, which had a positive effect on his career at Royal Poinciana, a club of successful businessmen. He sure knew club politics, and Clint once said when individual members approached him about the course he’d smile and patiently took the attitude of bless your heart, made a note, and took it to his green committee chairman.

That smile and serving attitude was effective, and a great example which has been passed on as advice to other superintendents. It showed respect yet kept everything in perspective. I remember observing Clint all excited once and driving up to his club president when he was playing golf, showing the president an aerifier core with deep roots.

Those Royal Poinciana greens were constructed over phosphate rock with no subsurface drainage and Clint’s crew aerified them constantly to keep them draining well. He even got his president excited. This was ground-roots politics concerning his core aeration and it helped the club understand the success they were having through backing his programs.

That excessive coring began earlier when the club experienced



Clint Smallridge

bermudagrass decline, a new disease back then without a name and no known chemical cures. Thinking like the turf again, Clint just went into action and cored those greens eight times, and the disease disappeared.

A Florida native, with roots dating back to the Great Awakening in the mid-1700s in Virginia, Clint learned at an early age to make do with what he had. There’s no doubt this had a big influence on Clint’s early success in the Bahamas.

In addition to being able to think like the grass, Clint also had an amazing mechanical mind. This was often spurred on by his super mechanics, Tito, and Noel Chandler. Always creating something to make his job better, he received three different patents for inventing self-adjusting bedknives. An invention which put money

in his pocket though it never materialized through the major mower companies.

The combination of his amazing mind and ability to communicate came together in the late ‘70s-early ‘80s when Clint published an article in *The Florida Green* about using miles per hour relating to a car and converting that into hours of time for mowers and other equipment. He devised his miles per hour conversion to educate his members. Clint went on to present this information in slide presentations at Penn State University, the Metro Superintendents Association of New York, the Toro Company, and many others including at Florida Turfgrass Association meetings and USGA regional meetings. Based on Clint’s early articles and presentations, several equipment companies and other professionals have taken his information forward and expanded on it for many years.

Clint always kept that natural curiosity about “if he were the turf?” I can remember in 1980, observing Clint attending the American Society of Agronomy meetings with GCSAA president Palmer Maples. These were dedicated research meetings with formal papers given by university graduate students and turf researchers from around the world, but there was Clint, soaking it in.

When visiting him, his curiosity was obvious, and he would often talk about a plant part or interesting outer areas of the golf course (fishing holes included). I would often get a call from Clint to come this weekend because some researcher was

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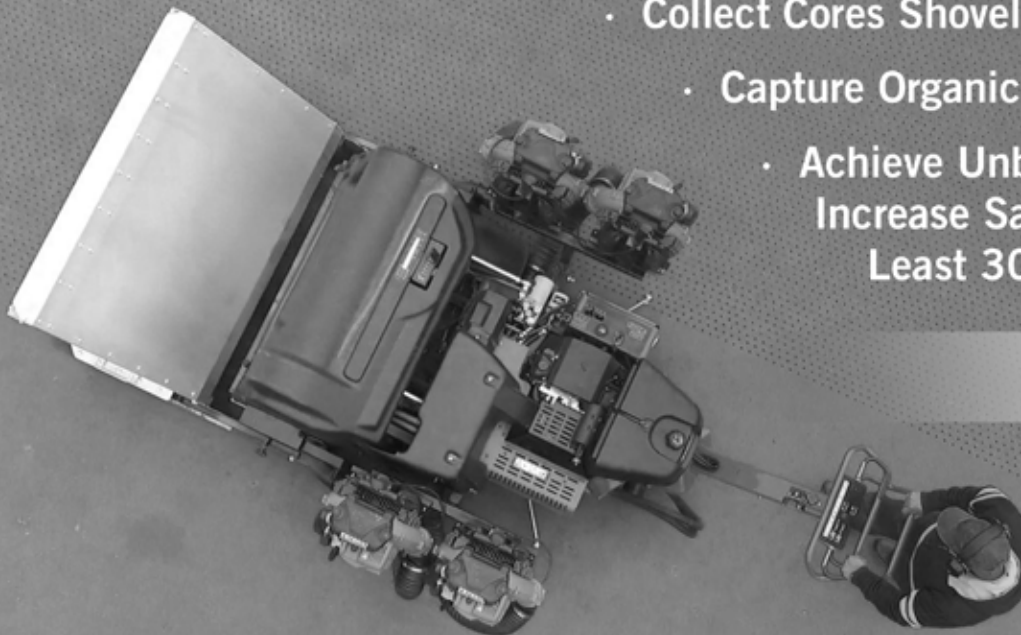
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going to be staying at his house. It could be Dr. Ken Payne from Michigan State University, who Clint referred to as a mentor, or Dr. Everett Bert, a weed scientist with the University of Florida. Clint once called and said Dr. Jim Reinert, an entomologist with the University of Florida was coming over to shoot pool and eat smoked mullet. We killed a lot of mole crickets over that pool table.

That's the way things were done before computers and facetime. Folks would sit and talk, call each other, and things got figured out. An example is when Dr. Gene Nutter, who was instrumental in starting the turf school at Lake City Junior College, would get together at a golf resort in Fort Lauderdale over many consecutive weekends with Dr. Granny Horn, Johnny Hutton and Clint, and together they discussed and wrote the first curricula for teaching turfgrass maintenance at the college.

Clint was the "King" of figuring it out, but he never thought he knew it all, so he constantly sought the best sources of information, making friends with his smile and ability to communicate. He also stood strong among his colleagues over issues and conduct in the turf industry, which made him a respected leader. Everyone who visited Clint, whether they were university professors or other turf managers, took notes.

Clint went on to many successes after his time in Naples, to include being superintendent at several other clubs including Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach. He showed his leadership ability by organizing an effective horticulture program which included exotic plantings throughout the golf course, which the members really enjoyed. The members even had their own fruit orchard set aside just for them.

Always the "Buck Stops Here" boss, he had a friendly way to encourage perfection and pride from each one of his crew members. At lunch, it wasn't unusual for some of his crew to brag about what a good job they did that day. Clint didn't have to be the tough guy because he kept his staff highly trained, and each was the ultimate professional. Once they worked with Clint, many never left.

Those special management skills became an asset for Clint. Before his retirement, he moved on to the St Kitts Golf Club, in St. Kitts and Nevis, owned and operated by an Oprah Winfrey company and became general manager. His talent for getting things done, especially in an island atmosphere and isolated location, made him a huge success which was recognized by Oprah herself as well as her business partners and colleagues.

Clint was also owner of a large successful lake management company in Florida, and he had other investments, so he could have been successful in any business and other areas in the turfgrass industry. But his contribution to the turf industry in Florida was that infectious natural curiosity, his ability to convert technical information into understandable communications.

As Cary Lewis said, "Our turfgrass industry is a brotherhood" and two-way conversations and communication with each other and with our employers are key to success, longevity and meaningful friendships. Giving us examples of how to communicate was one of Clint's greatest gifts.

Clint Smallridge was one of the great leaders in the Florida turfgrass industry who was always in the information sharing business. ■

- Steve Batten, now retired, was an agronomist with the USGA Green Section

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A Short Turnaround for STRICKLAND'S TITLE DEFENSE

Recently, Seth Strickland attempted to do something even Dustin Johnson couldn't pull off - defend his "major" title just months after winning it. Johnson, of course, failed to make the cut at last year's Masters Tournament, five months after winning the coveted green jacket in the pandemic-delayed 2020 event. Strickland got just four months to enjoy being GCSAA's national champion before that title went on the line again in California in the first week of February. (This magazine was in production at that time.)

In the meantime, Strickland's trophy took pride of place in the pro shop of Miami Shores Country Club in Miami, where he has been superintendent for 20 years. That's not a case of showing off. It's more a case of giving in. For years, Miami Shores director of golf, Chris Baetzel, hounded Strickland to put his three earlier national championship trophies on display.

"I'm not really a big trophy guy," says Strickland, whose other wins came in 2005, 2008 and 2009. "But the pro has been wanting me to bring my national trophies up to the shop. Well, this national championship trophy is such an amazing looking tro-

phy. So, when they sent it to me, I took it to the pro shop."

Initially, Strickland found room for the trophy on a shelf behind the counter. "But my pro takes it and puts it on a table right in front of the cash register," he says. "So, every single person that comes to Miami Shores now to check in, sees the trophy and the article that was in *The Florida Green*. It's kind of embarrassing actually. I really don't want to be that guy to be honest, I like being behind the scenes. But my pro has made me that guy."

Strickland featured on the cover of last year's summer edition of this magazine. That story told how, since his 2009 national championship win, he had endured a series of close calls, including three runner-up finishes. Those frustrations and that prolonged break between victories made last October's win at Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Springs, CA in all the sweeter.

"Oh my God, it was such a thrill," Strickland says. "It had been so long since I won the other ones, it almost felt like the first time I'd done it."

Another thrill came moments after he tapped in the final putt

Miami Shores director of golf, Chris Baetzel, left, was so proud of Seth Strickland's national championship win that he placed the trophy and Strickland's recent cover story right in front of the pro shop counter.



for a 36-hole total of one under par 143, to win by four. Friend and former employee, Walter Chavez, now at Miami Beach Golf Club just across Biscayne Bay from Miami Shores, was watching and waiting for Strickland to finish.

“He came over and...it was a really awesome moment. He’s a good friend. We’ve known each other for many years,” Strickland says. “I guarantee you he is going to win one, one of these days. If he doesn’t, I’ll be very surprised. He’s a hell of a player.”

Indeed, Chavez finished fifth, and along with Jim Torba, from Wilderness Country Club in Naples, and Jason Bagwell, from Gleneagles Country Club in Delray Beach, was among four Floridians in the top 10.

Strickland also received a meaningful embrace from longtime rival, Mike Stieler, CGCS from California, after the round and a heartfelt congratulations from Texan Steve Gilley. “I played with them in the final group, and they are two former champions, so they know how much it means, and they know how important it is to win,” Strickland says.

“So, they were both happy for me, especially Mike. Mike and I have known each other for many years. He’s beaten me a couple of times and I’ve beaten him a couple of times. So, we have a really nice relationship, him and I. I made that tap in putt and he came over and congratulated me and he is this big ol’ dude, so he gave a big bear hug, and it was a nice moment.”

As satisfying as the victory was, he was equally gratified by the fact that his hard work produced results. “Starting about a month before, I practiced a lot. I put together a pretty good regimen that I stuck by, and it paid off,” he says, of a routine that involved about two hours on the range six days a week and a full round at least once a week. Saturdays were a rest a day.

“I always prepare for that tournament about a month in advance, probably as hard as anybody,” he says. “I normally practice a little every day anyhow. It’s like a release, my work out, my meditation, whatever you want to call it. It’s what I do to kind of relax, but not for more than an hour, generally 45 minutes. But when I’m getting ready for a tournament I definitely put in more time and practice for 1½ to 2 hours Monday through Thursday, then play Friday. Generally, I take Saturday off.”

There can be no doubting Strickland’s commitment to his game. After winning the national title, he followed up in early December with yet another win in the Central Florida GCSA’s Larry Kamphaus Crowfoot Open. The toughest drive in that win was not on any fairway but the highway between Miami and Orlando.

“I left at 5am, drove there, warmed up, played golf, got done, got the trophy, got back in the car and was home by 9pm,” he laughs. “It was a pretty long day.”

One title that eludes Strickland, surprisingly given his four wins on the national stage, is the Florida GCSA state championship. At least part of the reason is that while he is clearly committed to his game, his family still comes first. The state championship

often seems to clash with the week of the Strickland family get away.

“It’s been a quite a few years since I played in it,” he says. “It is one event I would definitely like to win, there’s no doubt. I would love to win that tournament, but my main focus is that national championship. And if my wife plans a vacation every year that falls on the week of the state championship, then so be it.”

As for his chances of going back-to-back at the national championship in San Diego, Strickland is justifiably optimistic.

“I’m hitting it as good as I’ve ever hit it in my whole entire life,” he says. “I just want to play more tournaments right now. I wish the national was tomorrow. Mentally, I’m in a great place, and I feel really good. I feel healthy. My back is not bothering me too much. So as long as I can keep this up, over the next little bit, I have a really amazing opportunity to make it five in San Diego.”

Regardless of how that event plays out, there are already plenty of winners from Strickland’s participation in tournaments, and that includes everybody who tees it up at Miami Shores. He believes that what he sees and appreciates on the course as a player increases his drive to deliver the same for his golfers.

“I tell you what, man, I am so glad that I play the game,” he says. “It makes my job just that much more enjoyable. It makes me want to make the golf course that much better.” ■

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Construction continues on the two-tier hitting bays and restaurant next to the lighted driving range behind Joe Brink.

Going Back and Forth IS A SIGN OF PROGRESS

For someone who first walk-mowed a green in 1985, Joe Brink admits it was pretty disconcerting when he couldn't find some of the tee boxes at his new job at the 27-hole Sailfish Sands Golf Course in Stuart. But he wasn't too hard on himself. After all, those tees he couldn't find were on the only golf course of its kind in the state – a nine-hole layout that can be played in two directions.

Before arriving last October, Brink had never seen one before, but nor have most people. According to golf course architect, John Sanford, there are only two others in the nation, in Georgia and Michigan. The reversible nine at Sailfish Sands is part of a comprehensive overhaul at the county-owned facility formerly known as Martin County Golf Course.

When authorities annexed part of the property as a runway protection zone for the adjacent airport, what was a 36-hole operation lost several holes on one course. With no room to relocate them, the county's director of Parks and Recreation, Kevin Abbate, suggested a reversible nine, where play switches between clockwise and anticlockwise routings every Monday.

Brink heard plenty about the new idea before taking the job. He lives barely a mile from former superintendent, David Hassel, and received updates over lunch from time to time. Before Hassel retired after growing in the reversible nine, he recommended

Brink for the job. They both worked for BrightView Golf Maintenance and Hassel knew that as much as Brink enjoyed his job at Lake Worth Golf Club, he could not pass up the opportunity to be involved with the new concept.

"I'd been talking to Dave throughout the whole construction," Brink says. "He'd been telling me about the reversible nine concept, but I didn't really understand it well. Anyhow, he said he was retiring soon and told me he thought I'd be a good fit. So, when BrightView offered me the opportunity to move, I jumped on it."

The chief challenge on arrival was that on most of the holes, the teeing grounds are part of the fairway and don't stand out like a traditional tee complex, with its own parking area, signage, ball washer or trashcan. Instead, they are slightly raised platforms within the fairway cut.

"When I first started, the layout was very confusing," Brink says. "The tees are mowed into the fairways, so the mowing lines and patterns didn't help line you up the corresponding green. Needless to say, it was very confusing not only for me but for the staff as well."

But that was as it should be. The tees aren't meant to be conspicuous, because "When you hit your tee shot while playing the

black course and land in the fairway you may be lying on a tee from the gold course,” Brink explains. “Now that I’ve been here and seen it work, it really is a good concept.”

The back tee on each hole, in each direction does have a tee that is more traditional including a permanent tee sign. From there, tees are designated with movable markers that are shifted daily to control wear, as on a conventional course. At the end of the week, those markers are removed and new ones go out at the opposite end of the hole.

The nines measure 3,368 yards (Black) and 2,868 (Gold) yards from the back tees and play as pars 35 and 34, respectively. Each nine features a variety of par 3s, 4s and 5s.

Overall, the reversible nine consists of just under 25 acres of fairways and tees, all grassed with Celebration and mown at .500, and two acres of Tifeagle greens, at .130. “That’s a lot of fairway and tees for nine holes,” Brink says. “But we need it for the traffic. The place is wide open and should be fairly easy to play. There’s not a whole lot of movement. It’s a typical Florida golf course in that sense.”

There are a total of 11 greens, one nursery green and 54 tees on the reversible nine.

When playing the Black course, there are two greens not used (3

and 9 Gold). And when playing the Gold there are two greens not used (4 and 9 Black).

“This may seem a bit confusing, but it actually works quite well,” Brink says. “The ninth hole on each course is also used as a putting green. When playing the Black, No. 9 Gold becomes the putting green, and when playing Gold, No. 9 Black is the putting green. Both ninth holes are located near the clubhouse facilities for easy access.”

Brink says Sanford “did a great job with the bunkering” from a maintenance perspective. “We have 32 bunkers that are not to severe,” he says. “You can have a six-inch rain event and there’s hardly any need for repairs. They are large enough to get the rake in, without being too big. Overall, I would say we don’t have any more or less challenges than your regular golf course.”

Sailfish Sands and Sanford were also recognized by the American Society of Golf Course Architects as one of three honorees in the 2021 Environmental Excellence Awards. The ASGCA says, that in addition to preservation of native trees and palms, “The new reversible nine-hole course reduced ... maintenance inputs (fertilizers, chemicals, mowing, etc.) by 40 percent. Site drainage was improved by raising low areas and removing nuisance vegetation that was preventing runoff from reaching critical outfall points. Twenty acres of unirrigated native areas were preserved to further reduce the actively maintained area.”



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Brink maintains the reversible nine and the 18-hole regulation course with a staff of 12 that he inherited, from Hassel. “Dave did a great job training this crew, and they’ve all been here a while,” he says.

He cites his equipment technician as one of the stars. “She’s probably one of the few women mechanics in the industry,” Brink says. “Her name is Rose Hand. She has been at this property since 1988 and I have to say she is one of the best mechanics I have ever had the pleasure to work with.”

Brink’s own career started at Johns Island Club under the legendary Tim Hiers, CGCS. After nine years there, he spent time under former Johns Island colleague, Chuck Green, at PGA Golf Club of Miami and TPC at Eagle Trace. Later, when Jim Applegate was building Grande Oaks Golf Club, Brink moved there for four years. His first superintendent job was at the Golf Club of Plantation and before Lake Worth, he spent 14 years at Evergreen Golf Club in Palm City.

In six years with BrightView, Brink has come to regard southeast area director, Mike Harbin, as one of the “best bosses” he’s ever had. “I’ve been very blessed in my career,” he says. “Just as I have at home with my wife, Sue. We’ve been married for 20 years and I wouldn’t have been able to do any of it without her support.”

While the reversible course is now open, work continues on the other major component of the facility redevelopment, a restaurant with a two-tier driving bay with food and drink service. There will be interactive screens in each bay allowing golfers to compete in a range of games.



Joe Brink in his new office at Sailfish Sands Golf Course.

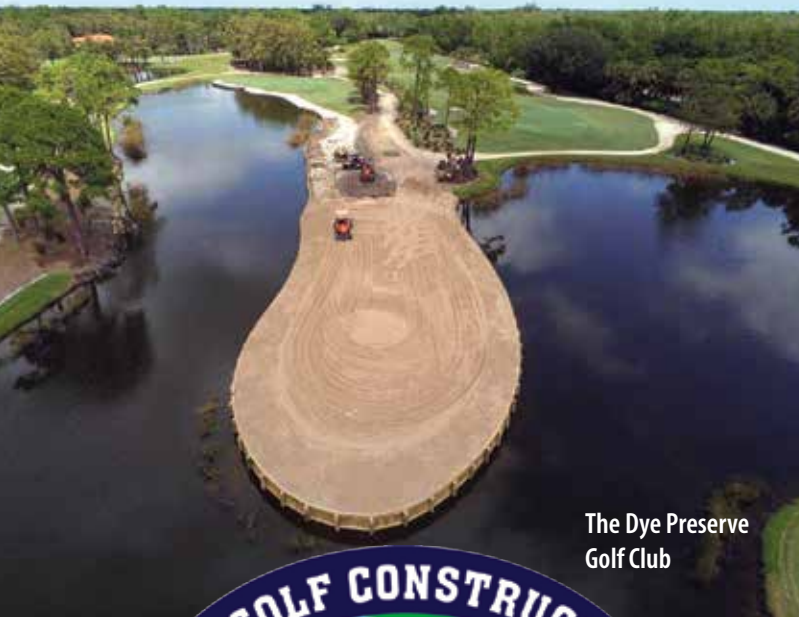
In addition, a driving range with an acre of lighted teeing grounds is already open, featuring Toptracer technology. Other changes include a new fleet of 75 golf carts equipped with GPS, three new on-course restrooms and a pro shop renovation.

“I’m really pleased and excited to be here,” Brink says. “They have big aspirations. ■

- Trent Bouts

Joe Brink steps “up” onto a tee on the fairway of one of the holes on the reversible nine. The slightly obscured front wheel of his vehicle shows just how slight the elevation is for the tee.





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One of the Best, ANYWHERE, EVER

Peter Brooks has been at the Everglades Club for 35 years and his enthusiasm for the place has only grown over that time.

Not all of us find delight in our chosen fields once the grind sets in. Eventually, the flush of discovery of all things new gets overtaken, first by familiarity, then repetition, and in the worst case, boredom. It might take a while, maybe years, maybe even decades. But at some point, for some of us, we reach a point where it all begins to feel the same.

Still, we stick it out. There are bills to pay, families to feed, kids to put through school, and besides, what else would we do? The job might not bring the joy and satisfaction it once did, but it has its pluses, its purpose, and it gives us a place, so on we grind.

Of all the above, absolutely none of it applies to Pete Brooks.

Brooks, 66, has lived golf course maintenance his entire adult life with the last 35 years of them at historic Everglades Club in Palm Beach. He could probably find his way over every inch of the Seth Raynor designed golf course with his eyes closed. Not that he would choose to.

Brooks remains too much in love with his work and the golf course to miss a moment. On a recent early morning ride, he breaks the silence with, “Wow, this is beautiful. Just look at this.”

The enthusiasm is not for show. An entire wall in his office is covered in photos from the golf course, moments he has captured with the skill of someone who could get paid to do that alone. He tells the story of the club with the ease of a tour guide and the knowledge of an historian. He’s researched it all and soaked in every detail. The place fascinates him, still.

As it should.

The Everglades Club is steeped in history dating to World War One. Launched by Paris Singer, of Singer sewing machine fame, and designed by Addison Mizner, the best-known American architect of his time, the facility was intended as a convalescent hospital for wounded officers. But the war ended before construction was complete and the hospital was repurposed into a club, opening in 1919.

Quickly, the club became a haven for the rich and powerful and remains one of the country’s more exclusive enclaves to this day. The entrance off Worth Avenue is easy to miss. Amongst the luxury boutiques - Chanel, Tiffany, AERIN, Ralph Lauren and Saks Fifth Avenue – that inspire comparisons with Beverly Hills’ Rodeo Drive, there is no sign out front. Just a simple bronze plaque on an archway, announcing PRIVATE.

Through the archway is a parking lot and the nondescript rear of a long single-story building that turns out to be the clubhouse. There is nothing to suggest anything of note on the other side, let alone something so special.

As Brooks says, scanning the street from that archway, “You look at this setting and you think, ‘I must be lost. There can’t be a golf course anywhere around here.’ I have friends who work in the golf business, and they ask me, ‘Where exactly is that? I’ve been on Worth Avenue and there is no golf course there.’”

Yet there is, a 75-acre, essentially square, island of green that

most of us will only ever hear about, and which for much of the year could be a park, rounds drop off so steeply out of season. The property is frequently described as an “oasis” in a heavily urbanized area, which is partly why, after all these years, Brooks still pinches himself, at least metaphorically.

Once, a visiting doctor playing the course, turned to Brooks, telling him, “I am green with envy. This is your office, every day.” “I said, ‘Yes, it is,’” Brooks laughs. “The golf business has been good to me. Being outside on a golf course for nearly 50 years has been fun. I am very fortunate that I found it, to be out here all the time, loving it and seeing it.”

His peers will tell you the profession has been lucky to find him.

“Pete Brooks is one of the best superintendents, anywhere, ever,” says Mark Reid, director of golf and grounds maintenance at The Breakers, just a mile north. Reid has been at The Breakers for 18 years and still counts Brooks’ proximity as a “blessing,” trading notes over calls “a couple of times every week.”

“He is one of the smartest, most innovative superintendents I’ve known,” Reid says. “A magician with blends. He understands his water, he understands his property, and he understands his membership. He’s old school but always keeping up with things, technology, always evolving, staying on the cutting edge.”

That’s saying something for someone who arrived in Palm Beach fresh out of high school in New York state in 1973. He started playing as a 10-year-old and help fund his game mowing lawns and raking leaves. Of course, he didn’t know it at the time, but he was mapping a career path even then. Moving south, he landed a job at Breakers West, quickly striking up a friendship with another kid fresh out of high school, Mark Henderson.

With some experience under their belt at Breakers West, the pair



The Everglades Club is an oasis tucked into urbanized Palm Beach.

enrolled in Lake City Community College. But before starting classes they took a month-long camping trip to Colorado and forged a bond that is strong nearly 50 years later. “Pete is a great superintendent, and I’ve seen a lot,” Henderson says. “He’s also a great friend, the kind who’d give you the shirt off his back.”

Henderson, now with Golf Agronomics, went on to his own long and successful career at facilities including Mayacoo Lakes Country Club, Gulf Stream Golf Club and Concession Golf Club. His first superintendent position was at Palm Beach Par 3 and when he left, Brooks got the job and stayed seven years before moving to the Everglades Club.

For many years, you could find the two of them most Friday

As clean as it gets. One of the fairways to the heaven that Peter Brooks enjoys at the Everglades Club.



afternoons as one half of a heavy-hitting foursome, along with Glenn Klauk, a two-time Florida GCSA President's Award winner, and Jeff Klontz, an institution at the Country Club of Florida. "It was fun," Brooks says. "We'd get together and play each other's golf courses and share ideas and look at problems. It really was wonderful, but things change and eventually everyone moved on."

He bolstered what he learned during those rounds and from those relationships with a steady stream of formal seminars over the years. "You'll never learn it all," he says. "That's why I'm always looking around, asking questions, taking seminars. A smart person understands they don't know everything, a dummy thinks they do."

Brooks is old enough to recall a different time in the profession, when neither the science nor the technology offered the mastery that it does today.

"Years ago, when I got into this, we caused a lot of our own problems through overfertilization," he says. "I always use the analogy of someone who doesn't eat right, or exercise and they end up on all these medicines. Same with grass. You overfeed it and under work it and now you have spray fungicides and insecticides. When you're not overfeeding, you have better turf quality. That's one of the big changes. All the water technology and how we manage water is another. Back then it was, 'Water is water, what do you mean?'"

Brooks is also working to remove areas of maintained turf between fairways to further reduce inputs and demand on his reverse osmosis irrigation system. As much as that serves the



Peter Brooks at the entrance to the Everglades Club that is easy to miss if you don't know what to look for.

club's environmental goals – it has been Audubon certified for more than a decade – it will also help resolve shade issues from an abundance of palms.

"I saw some courses on the west coast using these shell screenings to eliminate turf in shade areas, so I've a test area in place to see how the membership receives it and it's been positive so far," he says.

Another current focus is regrassing fairways with Bimini after removing organic build up. "I have had a little test plot out there and been visiting other golf courses and interviewing everybody who has experience with it and haven't heard a negative thing yet," he says.

Steep bunker faces present a constant test for golfers and golf course superintendent alike at the Everglades Club.



He hopes the Bimini, with its reputation for doing well in cooler weather, will eventually allow him to do away with overseeding. The Everglades Club is possibly the last course on the east coast that still lays out ryegrass in winter. But Brooks says he has had no choice given how busy the course gets through the first quarter each year.

“During that period, I have more rounds per acre than any other golf course in the country,” he says. “We play about 21,000 rounds a year but 75 percent of them are in January, February and March. That rate of play equates to about 60,000 rounds a

year. And we have just 75 acres and that’s everything, including lakes, landscaping, maintenance facility. When you’re getting that any rounds per acre per year, that will beat the bermudagrass down to nothing.”

Brooks liaises with Mark Burrows for soil nutrition and analysis, John Foy as an “overall consultant” and architect Brian Silva, who has worked with the club for a number of years, including a renovation in 2002 and an overhaul of greens, bunkers and surrounds in 2018.

He was so pleased with Tifgrand collars introduced then that he has since expanded those areas to a total of about four acres. On many holes the Tifgrand is mown at collar height creating a uniform blanket of turf stretching from the back of greens to the next tee. “I call it an intermediate dwarf and I think it looks wonderful,” Brooks says. “And there are so many options from a playing perspective. And that’s what Brian Silva wants, to get you thinking.”

Brooks might not be playing the course as much these days since his old Friday foursome scattered. But he remains as committed to it as he ever was, just as he is to his profession and the people who make it up.

“One of the things I’ve been fortunate to be involved with is volunteering at Augusta National for the Masters, starting in 1997 with Tiger’s first win,” he says. “I met people there over the years that I’m now friends for life with. Even though we see each other only once a year, I keep in touch with them all the time. I’ve also made good friends through the Seth Raynor Society. Yeah, this business has been very good to me.” ■

- Trent Bouts

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RISE AND SHINE HELPS GIBSON RISE AND SHINE

by Trent Bouts

Bryce Gibson, left, doesn't miss those winter mornings in upstate New York when his fingers were cold and stiff like icicles, but the cows needed milking anyway. A teenager then, Gibson had no idea that life on a dairy farm would prepare him so well for a future as a golf course superintendent. But now, from the vantage point of his 10th year caring for the golf terrain at Interlachen Country Club in Orlando, it makes all the sense in the world.

"Early mornings and being outside are in my blood," he says. Just like hard work, a love of the land beneath his feet and a readiness to accept, and adapt to, the unexpected. "My dad always taught me to prioritize, to have your day planned and know what you're going to be doing. Obviously, things come up that change the day, but you've got to be able to pivot, find a solution to the problem and keep moving."

If you can't do that, you cannot be a golf course superintendent, no matter how much you might know about grass. Plan, pivot and still produce. That is foundational to all good golf course maintenance, and Gibson grasped the principle long before his hands ever wrapped around a golf club.

He was 17 when that happened, and then only because his girlfriend's father owned a driving range and pitch and putt, in the Finger Lakes region between Rochester



Color and texture are easy to find at Interlachen, even in winter.

and Syracuse. “I would go up there and smack balls around,” Gibson says. “And there would be days when she didn’t want to work so I’d work her shift for her. I kind of got into golf that way.”

That was in 1997, the same year Tiger Woods won his first major, The Masters, by a record 12 strokes. And like countless kids, Gibson found himself hooked on the buzz. A few months later, he joined nearby Lakeside Country Club. “You could say I’m a product of the Tiger boom,” he says.

Still, it wasn’t like golf became a sunup to sundown obsession like it can for kids on school holidays who’ve caught the bug. For Gibson, it was something he managed “maybe twice a week” during summer, squeezed in between morning milking, chores like sweeping out the barn, feeding livestock, tending hay, and then more of the same at the other end of the day.

“Obviously, it was a grind every day. There wasn’t a lot of get away time,” he says. “Still, every day was fun. Well, not so much fun, I guess, as it was interesting. You develop an affinity with your animals and the property. It’s just like this (golf course maintenance). It’s hard to step away from the property. Before you leave, you really need to have your ducks in a row, be sure everything is lined up and that everybody is on the right page.”

It speaks to Gibson’s ability in that regard that Interlachen didn’t miss a beat during a testing period after his wife, Lisa, was diagnosed with cancer in September of 2018. That news came just months after Gibson became superintendent following the retirement of Central Florida legend, Stuart Leventhal, CGCS.

A Florida GCSA President’s Award winner and Golfweek’s SuperNews Superintendent of the Year in 2005, Leventhal was superintendent at Interlachen from its opening in 1985. Gibson served as Leventhal’s assistant from the fall of 2011. But what shaped as a seamless transition after seven years as a team was

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Bryce Gibson says Interlachen has “a lot of unique characteristics” from Joe Lee’s original design.

quickly thrown off script by Lisa’s diagnosis, though not offline.

“Obviously, trying to continue the growth that Stuart and I had been working towards got pushed to the side,” Gibson says. “Fortunately, I have a really good assistant, George Long, and he and the crew helped a lot, understanding and knowing that I wasn’t going to be on property quite as often, with Lisa’s chemo and so on. I don’t know how I could have done it without George and the crew.”

Sadly, Lisa Gibson lost her battle last June. Long wasn’t the only key player in support during the three-year ordeal. Environmental technician and horticulturist, Emi Sakiyama, was another who helped “pick up projects” and, along the way, ensure that Interlachen maintained its Audubon certification, one of the longest held in the state.

In 2021, part of that work, with the help of Long, included a case study detailing the golf course maintenance department’s dramatic reduction in fertilizer use over the preceding five years. That was the result, Gibson explains, of an emphasis on “feeding the plant when it needs it and feeding the plant when it can use it.”

By making the most of technology, slow-release fertilizers and keeping his ear to

the ground, Gibson says his team has gone from applying 8lbs of nitrogen on greens to “between 2.5lbs and 3lbs of granular.” “Foliar feeding might be another half a pound or so,” he adds. “On the golf course, we only put 2lbs N on roughs and fairways, and tee-tops get 3lbs to 4lbs, depending on the amount of wear and tear.”

Another factor in that reduction is the attitude of golfers, who generally account for about 25,000 rounds a year, up from about 18,000 when Gibson arrived.



Environmental technician and horticulturist, Emi Sakiyama, and assistant superintendent, George Long.

“The members are really developing an eye for how the golf can look, naturally, through the seasons,” he says. “When we get into dry season, it’s amazing the compliments people give. The golf course doesn’t look good, it’s brown and yellow, but the members are very playability oriented. The love how the ball rolls and they enjoy the variation in course character over the year. They like the fact we don’t overseed wall to wall.”

The only overseeding at Interlachen is on tees, which are smaller than ideal for the amount of play and so need the help recovering. Built on what Gibson’s describes as “basically a peat bog,” the course’s heavy soil makes overseeding fairways and roughs impractical, particularly since there are no cart paths from tee to green, except on par three holes.

“When we get a lot of rain, the soil acts like a sponge and just holds the water,” Gibson says. “It doesn’t really release it.” As a result, managing cart traffic and golf course maintenance traffic is a frequent challenge. “But Stuart did a good job helping me build those relationships with members to help them understand why we have to close the course to golf carts at certain times of the year.”

Still, there are some advantages to

the heavy soil. “Nematodes aren’t a stressor, which is nice,” Gibson says. And he can use pre-emergents at lower rates since the soil holds them longer. “That is good for the environment and the pocket-book. But weeds are our biggest battle, kyllinga and sedge. We’ve done a good job managing the goosegrass and the Poa has been pretty good the last couple of years in winter.”

A 270-acre property with 105 acres of managed turf originally designed by Joe Lee, Interlachen underwent a comprehensive renovation under the hand of Steve Smyers in 2007. There is a prospect of another overhaul on the horizon, although the scope is under discussion. At a minimum, Gibson hopes to see bunkers redone and a new irrigation system to give him greater control of how much water goes where on that soil.

“Obviously, it’s not the historical golf course that some are but it’s got a lot of unique characteristics that people recognize and love, and I am proud to be here,” he says. “Sure, it took being here seven years to become the superintendent, but I understood that this property was unique - they were able to move the land a little when it was built - and I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to advance here.”

Good judges saw something in Gibson from his earliest days in the business. Originally in college to become a schoolteacher, he changed course after his first practicum in the classroom. His grandmother died around the same time, then the family farm sold in 2001. “Life kind of changed,” he says. “And I needed a job.”

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Bryce Gibson is "proud" to be superintendent of a "unique" property at Interlachen Country Club.

He went to work at Lakeside, where he had that junior membership. His boss, Tom Corcoran, had him walk-mowing greens the first day and by the second week he was cutting cups. "Tom realized how much I was enjoying it and understanding it," he says. His part-time hours increased and soon Gibson was back in school at SUNY-Cobleskill with a new major, plant science. His professor, Bob Emmons, was someone so committed to the field that he received GCSAA's Distinguished Service Award in 2003.

It wasn't the last time Gibson found himself in the right company. Indeed, it wasn't even the first.

Corcoran's brother, Jeff, was, and still is, superintendent at Oak Hill Country Club, a perennial major championship host venue and Gibson parlayed that relationship into an internship there. Earlier, he'd interned at Glens Falls Country Club, an historic Donald Ross layout, where Chris Frielinghaus has been superintendent since 1989. It was a great introduction to a high-end golf and also the work it took to deliver it.

It was Jeff Corcoran who pointed Gibson to his next opportunity, working for Russ Meyers at Card

Sound Golf Club in Key Largo. "I learned a lot from a guy who is obviously very experienced in the industry," Gibson says of his time with Meyers, now in his second stint at Southern Hills Country Club, a multiple major host venue. "You learn what to do and what not to do. He was a very passionate guy. But also, at the end of the day we'd go have a drink and talk shop, so it was a really good experience."



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Bryce Gibson says Interlachen's members have a "keen eye" for how the golf course can look and play from season to season.

Then it was Meyers who pointed Gibson forward, putting in a call to Scott Scamehorn, CGCS then at Mountain Lake Golf Club in Lake Wales, and now at Reunion Resort, Orlando. "It just shows the importance of networking, something Bob Emmons always stressed, and working hard," Gibson says of the opportunities that kept presenting themselves.

A Seth Raynor classic, Mountain Lake proved an ideal landing spot, and Scamehorn, a generous mentor, just like Gibson's previous bosses. Scamehorn always allowed Gibson to sit in on discussions with the green committee and green committee chair, giving him tremendous insight into how decisions get made and how to talk with those who help make them.

"It worked out beautifully. You learn a lot on those kinds of properties because there are so many nuances, between the membership and the golf course itself," he says. "I loved it at Mountain Lake. I could have been there forever, I think." Except he was ready for the next stage in his career and possibility seemed more imminent at Interlachen, where the club was looking to prepare for Leventhal's retirement.

That may not have come as early as anticipated but the time in between was well spent. "Those years under Stuart's tutelage allowed me to pursue opportunities to be involved in the industry outside the golf course," Gibson says. He became a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador, which in turn led to his appointment to the Seminole County Parks and Preservation Advisory Committee. Industry involvement was something preached by his father, a three-time president of the local Farm Bureau chapter.

"He would go to Albany and to Washington, DC

starting when he was in his 20s, helping with issues in the ag. industry," Gibson says. "So, he instilled it in me, definitely encouraged me to be involved and give back to the industry as much as you can."

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Gibson's parents also encouraged him to find what industry worked for him. "They were always adamant that I needed to make my own decision on a career, that I didn't need to take over the family farm," he says. "In that part of the country, the trend was going towards big farms, and we were not a big farm. My dad saw the writing on the wall. They were always supportive of me, every step of the way. They could see the passion I had for this work."

That philosophy of support and encouragement is something Gibson tries to employ with his own team. An approach that he says is made all the more possible and effective at Interlachen because it is part of the culture of the club itself.

"Interlachen is a family. The tenure you find here on staff at the club is amazing. The members definitely take care of everybody," he says. "It's nice in this labor climate to be able to tell guys that holidays, holiday bonuses, holiday parties are all part of it here. On our crew, we try to do a crew outing every month or so, off property. We go bowling, go-karting, darts and billiards. We've had a poker tournament."

Gibson says those activities are important for morale "because the grunt of the summer, August and September, can get really difficult." "The fly-mowing out here can be tough," he says. "Some guys just don't look forward to Monday mornings."

On some level, Gibson is also extending his gratitude. Many on



Sleek lines and a slick putting surface at Interlachen Country Club.

the current crew of 26 were there while he and his wife fought her illness. "I leaned on the crew, especially George (Long)," he says of his assistant, who he hired just weeks before her diagnosis. Long was himself a superintendent in Maryland for seven years but came to Florida for his wife's career with Advent Health.

"I was so fortunate to have an assistant that knew the industry and knew what to do," Gibson says. "I would hate to see him go but he definitely deserves to be a superintendent again someday, if that's what he wants." ■

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Wyndemere's New Facility TO GIVE LONG-TERM BENEFITS

A \$3-million upgrade of the golf course maintenance facility at Wyndemere Country Club in Naples will pay dividends for years to come, says golf course superintendent Aaron Ohloff. The new facility will greatly increase efficiency, help with employee recruitment and retention, and keep equipment in better condition. The project is in addition to \$21-million worth of improvements to the clubhouse and other facilities.

The golf course maintenance facility now features an all-new wash area, fuel area, chemical storage and IPM center, new material storage bins, a new building for staff with new offices, expanded bathrooms, a larger break area, kitchen, and a new fertilizer room. Ohloff's equipment managers and his two technicians will also have their own work space with a lift and grinders. "No one will have to wait for someone else to finish before they can do what they need to do," Ohloff says.

Every employee will also have their own dedicated tool locker. "We hope we can give them everything they need to do the job," Ohloff says. "When they need a shovel, they will grab their own personal shovel not one just hanging on a wall. We're hoping they take some pride in what they have and take some accountability for it."

Ohloff says the project was several years in the making, dating back to a visit the club's general manager made in 2017 when he was interviewing for the job. "He was hired then (Hurricane) Irma hit," Ohloff says. "He told me that as part of his tour of the area for his interview that he'd earmarked the maintenance facility as an area that needed to be upgraded."

Clearing for the overhaul and additions to what was a 40-year-old facility began a year ago.

"We lacked enough space to store all the equipment we use inside," Ohloff says of the old facility. "So that was a big push to expand so we could store the club's assets under a roof and behind a lock. Not that we've had any theft issues. But it's just one of those things. When you have a multi-million-dollar equipment fleet you really don't want it just sitting outside."

It wasn't just the equipment Ohloff and the club wanted to take better care of.

"Employee retention and employee recruitment were definitely part of the thought process," he says. "We wanted to give employees a better environment when they are at the shop, whether

Wyndemere Country Club's new Carbtrol equipment wash station is part of a \$3-million upgrade of the turf care center.



before work or in the lunch break. Since they spend 90 percent of their time outside, they've got to enjoy being on the golf course. But when they do spend time at the shop it's nice to have a space where they can enjoy those down periods."

Ohloff says the previous space was "small and had one bathroom with one toilet and one urinal." "Now we have three toilets, four urinals, multiple sinks and updated kitchen area with dishwasher," he says.

The relocation of the equipment wash and fuel areas next to each other on the way into the facility will also improve efficiencies. "We strategically laid out where we wanted the equipment wash area and fuel line so it's really the first area every employee typically drives by on their way back to the shop," he says. "Before, we washed it in one area, then drove to another area to fuel up. So, there was a lot of wasted time just driving around the facility?"

Ohloff says there was no interruption to golf course maintenance during construction, something he stressed as a priority going into the project.

"It wasn't difficult to take care of the golf course with the construction going on because I was pretty adamant that we needed to avoid that," he says. "There were three buildings that were either being built brand new or being renovated. So, we turned it into a three-phase project, so we were never displaced. I was never without an office. We were never without a break room.

"It was nice not having to completely pull all the equipment out because we were tearing something down or whatever. The biggest thing we lost was probably toilets. We had to go porta-potty for a little while. Honestly, it was very simple considering the scope of what was involved."

Ohloff, who has been at Wyndemere for eight years, says if there was one thing he would recommend to colleagues from his experience it would be to devote more time to reviewing plans.

"As cumbersome and maybe boring as it may be, I would highly recommend going through every sheet of the plan before you begin construction," he says. "I mean there is so much that goes into it, it's easy just to scroll through the pages and overlook certain details that would be easier to address before you started building. I mean nobody likes change orders, right.

"If I could go back, I would set up meeting times with the architect and general contractor and go through it all. Maybe you block out an hour on one day for three weeks in a row, or say, okay this week we're going through the entire electrical plan, next week we're going through the mechanical plan and so on.

"But knowing what I know now, I would have dedicated the time." ■

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Backyard Brilliance at Barefoot Country Club

by Craig Smith

Like any golf course worth its salt, the finishing hole is demanding at Barefoot Country Club in Flagler Beach. But you won't find this golf course ranked alongside Bay Hill or TPC Sawgrass.

This nine-hole course sits on just a half-acre of land in the backyards of neighbors, Jayce Ramage and Darren Bache, and it is played with one club - usually a 7-iron - and a wiffle golf ball without holes.

There are three par 5s and three par 3s, the shortest of which is the second hole, measuring just 25 feet. The tough finishing par 4 is a 165-foot dogleg right that allows golfers the option of playing around Ramage's house or trying to drive over it.

"We've had plenty of wiffle balls end up in our drain spout," says Ramage, who briefly tried his hand as a professional golfer following graduation from Georgia Southern University in 1996. "We've had a hole-in-one on that hole and plenty of 'others' too high to count."

Constructed in 2007, Barefoot Country Club was born from a desire to offer something different for the neighborhood tailgate party before the annual Georgia versus Florida football showdown in the Southeastern Conference. "To be clear, we don't actually go to the game," says Ramage. "It's tailgating without tickets to the game."

"Darren is a Florida graduate, and I am a big Georgia fan," says Ramage, a regional sales manager for Pro Plus Products, a Florida-based company that sells liquid fertilizer that works through a golf course's irrigation system. "Our idea of the golf course came from one too many beers I think, but it was a good one. We wanted to do something different for our tailgate party, and this was it. We have had the same hole locations for 14 years. The green fee hasn't changed either - it's still \$1, which is stockpiled and paid out when someone gets a hole-in-one. The last payout was \$87."

"Young or old, no one has a bad time here," says the 49-year-old Ramage, whose wife Christy has introduced the wiffle ball golf craze to her kindergarten classes. "It's putt-putt golf with a real golf club and swing. We don't have any children of our own, so Darren and I are the kids on the block," laughs Ramage. "This is where adults turn into kids."

To market the "facility," the two neighbors have created a course logo and a scorecard, with the tagline "Barefoot Country Club, where the elite play in their bare feet."

"Jayce and I have had some good matches over the years, but I'm not the stick he is," says Bache, the 49-year-old golf course super-



The architects of Barefoot Country Club, Jayce Ramage and Darren Bache, both of whom have long careers serving the golf industry.

intendent at Cypress Head Golf Club. "The course has become so interesting that people will drive down our street and just stop to ask questions. We could use a sign like, 'Adults at play.'"

The course is measured in feet, not yards, but there is still plenty of trouble if a golfer strays from the one-inch fairway cut. The bermudagrass rough is maintained at five inches, and there are four sand bunders that come into play on the crisscrossing holes. In a labor of love that has cost in excess of \$50,000 in manhours, Ramage cuts the fairways, while Bache maintains the bunkers and the thick rough, where a wiffle ball can settle on top of the rough or sink down to the roots, leaving an impossible shot.

"A long drive is between 40 and 50 feet," says Ramage, who has



The rough is tough at Barefoot Country Club, measuring five inches. Keeping the rough in top condition is the work of Darren Bache, while Jaycee Ramage mows the fairways.



The par-5 ninth hole gives golfers the option of playing around the house or gambling on a tee shot over the house.

the course record of 13-under-par 23 for the nine holes. “It just like real golf. We play the ball down, and there are no gimmies. You can go from being under par one day and well over par the next. I know that for a fact.”

While the backyard course is open to the public and it is known locally, Ramage is hoping to take it to the next level by getting his course rated by the U.S. Golf Association. Meanwhile, there are others looking to copy his idea of building a wiffle ball golf course; a Florida legal firm and a resort in the Bahamas are among those showing interest.

“Golf is supposed to be fun, and this has been a blast for us,” says Ramage. “We both love golf and have been in the golf business all our lives. We did this truly for the love of the game.” ■



There are no gimmies at Barefoot Country Club, which can lead to some very high numbers.



A backyard version of the Swilken Bridge at St Andrews is in play at Barefoot Country Club.

IN THE NEWS



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

Andrew Norman

Duran Golf Club

Viera Voice, November 26

Some lucky osprey is getting a new home just in time for the holidays. A team at Duran Golf Club, erected a 20-foot wooden pole and platform near the 18-hole golf course's 10th hole and a lake in hopes of attracting one of the fish-hunting birds of prey ready to build a nest. "At this time, we do not have an incumbent osprey," Duran Golf Club superintendent Andrew Norman said. "However, we have spotted one or two checking out the site and structure. Hopefully, there will be a claim staked in the near future."

Duran officials came up with the idea for an osprey nest during a bi-annual meeting to discuss projects and environmental impacts of the club, which has been certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary through Audubon International since February 2020.

With assistance from on-site employee and Florida certified master naturalist Brenda Pannell and Timothy McClaskey, Duran's assistant superintendent who also is licensed in native area management, officials selected a site between the clubhouse and the 10th hole for the osprey pole, Norman said.

Visible to drivers and passers-by from Stadium Parkway, the pole is the first installed at Duran and has generated positive feedback from visitors, Norman said. More might be added if the venture proves successful, he added. The pole is one of numerous environmental projects planned at Duran, including bee hotels, pollinator gardens, debris and brush piles for smaller wildlife, and several on-site Monarch butterfly gardens.

"Golf courses have historically gotten a bad stigma as far as being environmental stewards, when in reality it is quite the opposite," Norman said. "So, it is always nice to receive recognition for our environmental efforts."

Tim Hiers, CGCS

White Oak

Golf Digest, December 10

...there used to be a 178-acre, 18-hole public course known as Clear Lake (Houston, TX). To retain water during hurricanes like Harvey in 2017, the city decided the land would better serve as a flood plain. The holes have been converted into hiking trails and ponds that hold hundreds of millions of gallons of water. After the 2008 recession, it seemed many courses would go the way of Clear Lake. Audubon magazine published an article entitled, "Bye-bye Golf Courses, Hello Nature Preserves." Naturalists delighted. But this ignored a fundamental aspect of the golf course: It is predicated on nature.

"How many people get to go out in the morning, watch the sun come up and see a variety of mammals, birds, snakes, beautiful trees and beautiful water?" asks Timothy Hiers, the superintendent at the Dye Course at White Oak in Yulee, FL. "That's one of the reasons there's a love for this business."

Hiers has become part of superintendent lore involving insects and beer—gallons upon gallons of beer. Here's his tale of the drunk flower grub beetle.

A grub is like a "worm on steroids," Hiers says, that grows into a hairy beetle. They feed on the roots of plants, and, at the course he was with at the time, they had taken over the property. Possums, raccoons and foxes were tearing up the course foraging for some juicy grub. Looking for a non-toxic solution, he called an entomologist at the University of Florida. Here's another lesson from the wildlife-friendly super's playbook: Don't go it alone. When in doubt, recruit the help of local students, researchers and professors. It builds community credibility and leads to crafty solutions to pesky problems, like this one.

The entomologist recommended breaking the reproduction cycle. "She said, 'You get a gallon milk jug and cut out a small circle in the center, and at the top you put in beer and bananas. In the bottom you mix water with soap. Bananas attract male beetles. They would then drink the beer and drown in the soap and water. We killed as many as 400 male beetles a day out of each jug.'"

"There are people who are environmental activists, but golf-course superintendents are active environmentalists," Hiers says. "There's a big difference. We know the soil, we know the water, we know the atmosphere, we know the wildlife. We don't talk about it; we live it."

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Robinson Earns GCSAA Ambassador Award

David Robinson, CGCS and senior director of golf grounds at Marriott Golf in Ocoee, has been named a Grassroots Ambassador Leadership Award winner GCSAA. The award, presented quarterly in partnership with The Toro Company, recognizes and honors individuals for their advocacy and advancement of the GCSAA priority issues agenda through congressional outreach and relationship development with a member of Congress. Through Toro, winners receive a trip to take part in the 2022 National Golf Day in Washington, D.C.

A 27-year member of GCSAA, Robinson has been heavily involved in the golf industry over his career and had a long-held interest in the legislative process, so becoming a Grassroots Ambassador was a natural fit. He joined the Grassroots Ambassadors program in April 2017 to give back to the industry and share his story as a superintendent.

“I’ve learned that if we – golf course superintendents – are not the ones telling our story, someone else is going to tell their own version of it,” Robinson says.

Robinson was paired with Rep. Val Demings (D-FL-10), and his goal was to have Demings tour a golf course. After four years of working toward his goal, Robinson achieved it in June 2021 when Demings and a staff member, Mark Hinson, joined Robinson for a course tour.

“When I took the congresswoman out onto a facility and walked her through our practices and what we do, I saw the light bulb click,” Robinson says. “When I hear, ‘Wow, I never realized this is the level of maintenance that goes into maintaining a golf course,’ I know I’m doing my job - educating people on what goes on behind the scenes.”

Prior to the course tour, Robinson attended multiple National Golf Days, attended state lobby days in Tallahassee, and met with Demings in her district office. Moving forward, he will remain an advocate for the golf course management industry and keep building on his relationship with Demings. “I’m glad to have the opportunity to tell our story,” Robinson says.

“We are truly appreciative of David’s commitment to fostering a strong relationship with Congress and bettering the golf course management industry,” GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans says. “His determination to share the importance of golf and educate others on the environmental benefits is commendable. Congratulations to him for this well-earned award.”

The Grassroots Ambassador program matches superintendents with members of Congress to build strong relationships between them. More than 470 GCSAA members currently serve as ambassadors.



David Robinson, CGCS with Rep. Val Demmings.

An advertisement for Growing Solutions South, LLC. The central graphic is a large white golf ball with a blue water drop on top, surrounded by green foliage and golf flags. Text on the ball reads: "It's All About Control", "The ONLY Irrigation Water Treatment System with pH Over Flow Technology". Below the ball is a photograph of a piece of irrigation equipment. Text below the equipment lists: "Also Specializing In: · Fertigation Injection Equipment · Wetting Agent Injection Equipment · Wash Water Recycle Systems · Environmental Centers". At the bottom, it says "Growing Solutions South, LLC" and provides contact information: "6360 Corporate Park Circle #2 - Ft. Myers, FL 33966", "www.YourGrowingSolutions.com", and "Director Of Sales & Operations - Scott Speiden 630-991-0333". At the top right of the ad, it says "For information call: 1-800-816-4041".

FL's Ruby in Running For Calendar Prize



A modest Ruby poses for owner, Gabe Gallo, from Fiddlesticks Country Club, with her picture in the 2022 Dogs Days of Golf calendar.

“Miss July” in GCSAA’s 2022 Dogs Days of Golf calendar is Ruby, a three-year-old yellow Labrador who “works” for Gabe Gallo, director of agronomy at Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers. Gallo is a graduate of Lake City Community College.

As the calendar explains, “Every morning, Ruby rides the course with her owner ... and is on the lookout for fox squirrels to chase, and members who might have treats. Ruby is a smart girl who knows not to walk on greens or in bunkers, instead running around them and meeting you on the other side. She loves to show off her tricks to staff, members and guests. No stranger to cameras, Ruby appears frequently in the club’s video updates to members.”

Florida GCSA members are encouraged to vote for Ruby at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in San Diego, CA in February. Members

can vote for her at the Lebanon Turf booth and the winning dog will earn \$3,000 for the chapter and a \$500 prize for her owner. Lebanon Turf is also donating \$2,000 to K9s for Warriors, an organization dedicated to providing service canines to veterans in need as a result of their service.

More Expansion For Florida Coast

Florida Coast Equipment continues to grow with the addition of three new locations in Florida. The company recently added new locations in Apopka, Ocala and Lecanto with the acquisition of three dealership locations from Agricon Kubota Superstore. Florida Coast, founded in 1985 with two employees, now has 10 locations and is Florida’s largest Kubota dealer and one of the leading dealerships in the country.

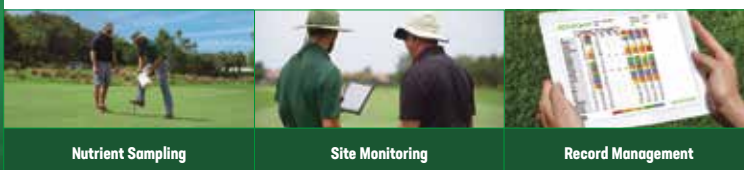
South Florida Loses Mack

The South Florida GCSA mourns the passing of longtime member John Mack. Mack worked at Fort Lauderdale Country Club as an assistant superintendent and before that at Jacaranda Golf Club, Bonaventure Country Club and Lesco. He was born and raised in Chicago and was an avid Chicago sports fan.

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Welcome New Members

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

Richard Adams, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Brightview Golf Maintenance, The Villages

Dane Alexander, Class A Golf course superintendent, Seminole Golf Club, North Palm Beach

Chris Armhein, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Legends Golf & Country Club, Fort Myers

Dustin Bailey, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Bonita Bay Club, Bonita Springs

Robert Bailey, Class B Golf course superintendent, Fiddlesticks Country Club, Fort Myers

Brian Becker, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, The Loxahatchee Club, Jupiter

Alan Fike, Class A Golf course superintendent, Seagate Country Club, Delray Beach

George Hansell, Class B Golf course superintendent, Jacksonville Golf & Country Club, Jacksonville

Justin Harper, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, White Oak Conservation, Yulee

Richard Havyer, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Fiddlesticks Country Club, Fort Myers

Justin Heath, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Seminole Golf Club, North Palm Beach

John Jurich, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, The Seagate Country Club, Delray Beach

Jackie Kaffenberger, Affiliate Owner, Southeast Turf Partners, Fort Myers

John Lanier, Class A Golf course superintendent, Cypress Golf Course Services, Pompano Beach

Silas Ledford, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Seminole Golf Club, North Palm Beach

Andrew Maccagnano, Class B Golf course superintendent, The National Golf and Country Club, Naples

Aaron Matthus, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Wyndemere Country Club, Naples

Jim Moore, Class A Golf course superintendent, Jupiter Country Club, Jupiter

Dana Orr, Class A Golf course superintendent, Down to Earth, Ocala

Wiley Parham, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, The Gasparilla Inn and Club, Boca Grande

Kyle Parsons, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, Bonita Bay Club, Bonita Springs

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Mike Rollins, Affiliate Eastern regional manager, SIP Corporation, Tampa

Spencer Snell, Class B Golf course superintendent, Grey Oaks Country Club – Pine, Naples

Kirk Thomas, Class C Assistant golf course superintendent, IMG Academy Golf Club, Bradenton

Brandon Whitley, Class B Golf course superintendent, Coral Creek Club, Rotonda West

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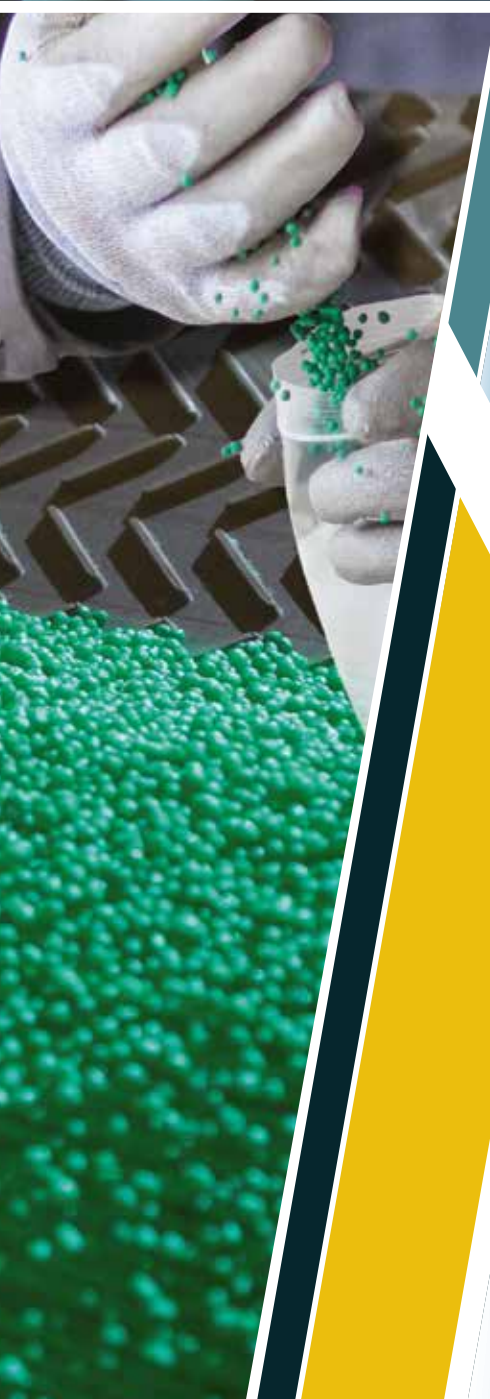
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Streamlining Certification For Today's Superintendent

Writing this, the air is fresh in Florida these past few weeks as we wind down 2021. Another fresh thing these days is the GCSAA certification program. Like most successful programs, as they grow, they need to evolve to meet changing times. This was the approach GCSAA's certification committee took to maintain the high standards of the certification process while reducing the amount of time necessary to complete it.

There is no denying it, the GCSAA certification program is not for the faint of heart. It has been regarded as one of the most robust certification programs in our industry and those who have passed it have truly stood up to the rigors.

Stephanie Confer, GCSAA's certification manager told me, "I don't have the exact percentage on this, but looking back it looks like only 25 to 30 percent of individuals who purchased the portfolio completed the certification process." Given the new changes to the program, now may be the right time to get started.

Previously, to be eligible, the applicant had to meet the eligibility requirements of specific levels of education and experience. In other words, meet the Class A requirements. In addition, the applicant had to have a current pesticide license or have passed the GCSAA IPM exam.

Also, the applicant must have completed the online GCSAA self-assessment and must have completed a portfolio. Finally, the applicant must have completed the proctored, paper-based exam and attesting of the golf course.

The new program is similar in several aspects. The applicant still must meet Class A criteria and possess a pesticide license or pass the IPM exam to apply. There continues to be an attesting component and an exam. The renewal criteria remain the same.

But the self-assessment requirement has been eliminated. Candidates and certified superintendents alike cited the self-assessment requirement as an obstacle to the program. The tool was not being used by members outside of those completing it for CGCS either. Since it has no bearing on demonstrating knowledge, it was removed as a requirement.

The portfolio has also been removed in its current form as it was also cited by members as an obstacle to applying. In addition, psychometrician, Dr. Kim Thayn, expressed that in the distant past, a portfolio was sometimes required in certification programs, but they are an outdated instrument today. Instead of the portfolio, competencies previously tested in the portfolio are now evaluated through either the written exam or attesting process.

Through a scientific process, the exam also has been reviewed and updated to align with today's superintendent competencies.

A new Leadership and Communication requirement has been added. Anyone who has completed the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series (ASCS) Principles of Leadership and Communications certificate has already met this requirement for certification.

If not, a candidate will be required to provide proof of activity in three of the four following activities:

- 1 - Write and publish an article for a chapter newsletter or GCM Magazine.
- 2 - Satisfy one of the following service categories:
 - Serve on a GCSAA chapter or golf organization task group or committee
 - Serve on a chapter board of directors
 - Participate in hosting a First Green field trip
 - Serve as a GCSAA Grassroots Ambassador
 - Attend National Golf Day
- 3 - Give a presentation and document the experience.
- 4 - Complete or update a facility BMP template or create and implement a BMP manual

The attesting process is to be enhanced and the certification committee is currently working through this process with Dr. Thayn. Attesting content will be reviewed and structured in a way that lends itself to providing better direction to the attestors for grading. This process will be completed and ready for most by the next growing season.

Also, now you can complete your exam and attesting in the order that works best for your schedule. Significantly, candidates can now apply and pay online and also take the exam online and get results immediately. The paper version is still available, though. But with the online exam, proctoring can be conducted remotely, with use of webcams. The committee is also preparing some sample questions to give candidates an idea of what the exam will entail and these should be available soon.

We can all be grateful to the staff at GCSAA and those who have served on the certification committee over the years for adapting and changing our certification process to meet the needs of today's superintendent. Our program remains the standard by which all others are measured.

Please feel free to reach out to Shari Koehler anytime for certification related questions at skoehler@gcsaa.org. ■

- *Ralph Dain is GCSAA's regional representative in Florida*



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