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Darren Davis

Originally from: Huntsville, Ala. Lived there one week. Grew up, lived and worked in Titusville, Jacksonville, Jupiter and Naples.

Education: 1991 - Penn State University. Two-year technical program certificate in turfgrass management. Recipient of Technical Writing Report Award and Penncross Growers Association Scholarship.

Employment history: 1992 to present, superintendent, Olde Florida Golf Club, Naples; 1991-92, assistant superintendent, Loxahatchee Club, Jupiter; 1990-1991, apprentice superintendent/spray technician, Augusta National Golf Club, Augusta, Ga.; 1988-89, spray technician, Golden Eagle Country Club, Tallahassee.

Professional affiliations: FGCSA (1991); FTGA (1991); GCSAA (1989); Current president of the FGCSA. Extensive committee service in all three organizations.

Honors: 1997 GCSAA Leo Feser Award for best written article in *Golf Course Management* magazine. 1996 GCSAA National Environmental Steward Award.

Goals: I have attained the goals I set for myself for the early part of my career. Therefore, as I will continually do throughout my life, I am in the process of establishing and recording in writing a new set of goals. A close friend once told me, "You are the author of your own destiny. If you want something badly enough, write it down, strive to accomplish it, and it will happen."

Philosophy: On life – "Work like you don't need the money. Love like you have never been hurt. Dance like nobody is watching." On work – "To be a successful manager surround yourself with quality people and provide them with an enjoyable, fulfilling work environment."

Advice: To future superintendents – Obtain a formal education. Do not get wrapped up in titles. Set goals and plan your future. Do whatever it takes to obtain those goals regardless of the personal sacrifice. Once you become a superintendent, don't forget those who helped you get there. Don't walk around with blinders on. Travel (even if just locally). Meet and get to know your peers. Don't be afraid to share your knowledge and experiences. Expand your horizons whenever possible. Make yourself a well rounded golf course superintendent.

Hobbies: Reading fiction, traveling, spending time outdoors experiencing nature, writing, yard work, photography, cooking, mountain biking, relaxing or strolling on the beach, spending time with good friends.



basis since they have no clerical personnel. Stacey is my computer whiz and does a lot of scanning of photos for me, besides keeping our paperwork flowing through the proper channels.

"The rest of the crew — our greensmen — do a fantastic job. Most are Hispanic, but two of my longtime employees are from Haiti. They have been with us since 1993. In fact we have very good longevity with most of our employees, which is critical with the labor trends these days.

"I think we offer good competitive incentives for our staff by providing a decent wage, clean uniforms, and a safe, clean place to work. They work a 37- to 40-hour week Monday through Friday and we cover weekends with volunteers on overtime. We have never had a problem finding the people to work. I think it is also very important to understand the personal needs of our crew."

"Since many of our crew members have families back in Mexico, they want to go home for visits and these may last longer than the typical two-week vacation. I have found that by accommodating our really good workers with some extended time off, we can count on them coming back when we really need them.

"And in our daily work we like to have fun. They get a big kick out of me trying to speak Spanish, but they appreciate the effort. We have a crew lunch once a month, and I learned a long time ago that it means more to them if we go where they like to go. The current restaurant of choice is the Rancho Grande.

"Another positive aspect about working at Olde Florida is the attitude of the members and the organizational philosophy. The club is run by the founding members under the leadership of an elected club president. The club manager/head professional and I as golf course manager report directly to him. But what I like best is that the members seem to truly appreciate and respect what we do. I try to do my part by communicating regularly to the membership individually all year long with updates and reports of what we're doing on the course in terms of improvements and interesting facts and information.



The flag on the par-3, 5th hole flies taunted in the breeze from an approaching storm. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



Olde Florida's overseeded greens turn purple only for a short time in Naples.

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Everglades Chapter

History: In 1968 superintendents in Charlotte, Collier and Lee counties had to drive either to Miami or Tampa on the two-laned U. S. 41 to attend superintendent association meetings. Collier County Extension Agent Don Lander and Bob Sanderson in Charlotte County began to gather superintendents together informally for discussions of common turf problems. By April of '68 both groups got together in Fort Myers at the Lake Lawn G.C. and decided to begin the Everglades GCSA. In the spring of 1969 a joint meeting was held with the South Florida GCSA on Marco Island and the ensuing golf outing gave rise to the Poa Annuu Golf Classic.

Founding members: Bob Sanderson*, president; Dempsey Brown, vice president; Dutch Vaughn, secretary/treasurer; and Paul Nevers*; Paul Frank*; Clem Stuart*; Joe Huckleby; Ralph Settles; Dwight Wilson*; Bob Cappeli; Cecil Johns; Ken Willis; Bill Baker; Sam Scherer; Bob Ahrons; Win Gibbs; and Jim Farnsworth. (* Indicates FGCSA President's Award winners)

Activities: The annual Poa Annuu Golf Classic moved around among the Lehigh, Mirror Lakes and Oxbow courses in the early years and has been played at Lely Resort and the Audubon CC, but traditional and current home base is the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club. This event remains one of the premier golf, social and educational highlights of the FGCSA calendar. Proceeds from this event have helped finance turf research and scholarships. Recently, the EGCSA has hosted a Spring Seminar bringing in leading figures in turf research and industry for a daylong educational conference.

Officers for 1999-2000: Rick Tatum, president; Steve Durand, vice president/treasurer; Gary Grigg, external vice president; Matt Taylor, secretary.

"It is gratifying when notable members like Mike Ditka or Marty Shottenheimer remember your name and go out of their way to meet and greet you when they see you on the course.

"Coach Ditka is a real golf fanatic. He may only get to visit a few weeks out of the year, but when he's here he is on the course from sunup to sundown. He usually takes a caddie and walks the course always playing more than 18 holes a day, often 36 or more. Even though he sometimes beats the walk mowers around, he never complains. He just loves being out there on his golf course enjoying the game and the peaceful environment."

Because of his performance and professionalism on the job and the back up provided by his staff, Olde Florida has encouraged and supported Davis's participation in professional organizations and his travel to leading golf courses and events nationwide. Davis also works with EPIC Productions which produces training videos for the golf maintenance industry.

Davis has worked as a volunteer at three Masters tournaments, a U.S. Open and a U.S. Senior Open. He is hoping to make it to Pebble Beach for the 100th U. S. Open to help out his old pal and superintendent, Mark Michaud.

"I have known all of these superintendents as friends and colleagues and it was a tremendous learning opportunity to be involved in course preparations at the highest level. Just being part of a work force made up of dozens of superintendents in that kind of atmosphere is networking of the highest order. But I also consider each one of those trips, as well as others, as work-related business. I have gathered lots of useful ideas that we have incorporated here at Olde Florida. I use a lot of photos and tips I have picked up in my travels for articles for the Super Tips section in the *Florida Green*."

Davis has been very active in the FGCSA, the GCSAA and the FTGA, serving on a myriad of committees. He has served through the chairs on the execu-

tive council of the FGCSA is now president, having been elected on July 31. He has traveled a lot, seen much and earned much respect for his devotion and leadership in his profession at a relatively young age. How did he get into this business?

"In high school I realized my basketball skills were not going to provide me with any type of career. After two years of community college, I still did not have a handle on a major or career path. I liked the outdoors and hunting and fishing. I considered marine biology or being a park ranger or wildlife officer.

"During and after community college, I was managing hundreds of acres of Christmas tree farms for several owners. I finally enrolled at FSU in civil engineering, but did not enjoy the quantity or type of math involved.

"A good friend mentioned some school in Pennsylvania that taught you how to build golf courses. I would need experience to enroll so I took a job at Golden Eagle C.C. and learned that the program at Penn State was actually in turfgrass management. The rest is history."

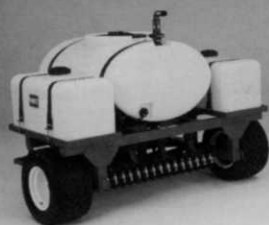
Effective superintendents today don't just happen. They are the sum total of not only formal and on-the-job turf education, but the also the intangibles of curiosity, a love for the outdoors and the traditions of the game of golf. Successful superintendents don't sit idly waiting for things to come to them. They get out and seek knowledge and new ideas. They interact and participate. Relationships with other people in the industry are key factors in the making of a good superintendent.

Davis cites several key relationships in his own development.

"First and foremost, Dr. Joe Duich, professor emeritus at Pennsylvania State University who not only taught me a great deal about the profession, but also educated me on several things that made me a better manager and person. He has continued to be there throughout the years providing valuable support in tough times.

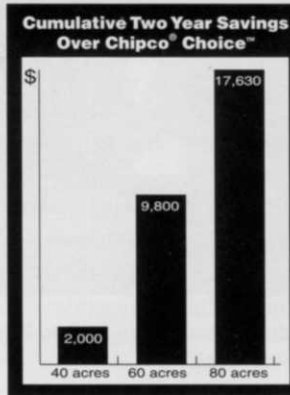
Equally important, a loving mother and father who have supported me through thick and thin and forced me to become an

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Olde Florida Snapshots by Darren Davis



Nearly 100 yards of bunker faces the members on the par 3, 13th holes as seen from behind the green. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

independent thinker and self-supporting.”

“Then in the business itself, I have a lot of people to thank for helping me along the way. There is Jeff Vietmeier, my first boss at Golden Eagle in Tallahassee who steered me to Penn State, and Marsh Benson at Augusta National who taught me valuable lessons in organizational techniques and professionalism.

“Then there was Phil Shoemaker at the Loxahatchee Club, where I learned what a good assistant superintendent should be. Also at Loxahatchee, Kurt Kuebler, the general manager, gave me valuable input on how a GM and the membership perceive a golf course superintendent. From him I also learn good interview skills.

“You can’t survive very successfully in this business without making good friends. I have been fortunate to have made a few who have remained trusted friends over the years. I thank Matt Shaffer currently at the Country Club of Cleveland for having the wisdom for “not” hiring me in the

frigid great white north at the Hershey Country Club, knowing it was the best thing for me at the time. Paul Latshaw, Sr., Winged Foot G.C. for being a true friend and confidant.

“Locally, Tim Hiers, CGCS, Colliers Reserve and Gary Grigg, CGCS, Royal Poinciana G.C. have been my “go-to guys” when I needed advice on turfgrass problems, a membership question, association volunteer challenges, or employment issues.

“Then there are Tom Burrows, agronomy consultant, and Frank Dobie of The Sharon Club of Ohio, who have provided advice on a multitude of issues from the perspective only those who have been in the business for a long time can provide. Finally, I’d like to thank Tom Wait of TRW Enterprises for being a good travel companion and for continually bringing me innovative ideas, products and techniques. There are many others to whom I am indebted for their ideas, comments and

opinions who have helped me become a better golf course superintendent.

“I am humbled and yet proud to think about how we have been part of the development of a lot of methods and procedures to produce a certain look and feel at Olde Florida, and to know that the results have been so successful and desirable that the members want to recreate that experience at the new club being built next door.”

The new club will be called The Golf Club of the Everglades. It will have a different look because most of the trees on the site were destroyed by a wildfire sometime ago, but it will have the same architect, Rees Jones, and the superintendent Jason Gerlach is coming from Olde Florida. Davis will be the project manager and consultant during construction and grow-in. Based on their track record at Olde Florida, when they get ready to open, I hope their scorecards read: “Don’t worry. Be happy here too!”



Improving Chapter Meeting Attendance and Participation

BY CRAIG WEYANDT, GCS

Yacht & Country Club of Stuart

Recently I asked the GCSAA about how I could improve at tence at the local monthly meetings. Here is their response for your review. As you will see, some we have tried, some we have not but at least I don't feel alone anymore.

Here is the GCSAA Response:

Craig,

The issue of low attendance at meetings and lack of member involvement is something many chapters are concerned with. Just based on the annual reports submitted for 1998, chapters reported an average meeting attendance of 25% of their total membership, regardless of their membership size. Your chapter may be slightly at the lower end (15 of 85 members = 17%), but your chapter is smaller than many.

In January, 13 affiliated chapters participated in the first strategic planning conference at GCSAA Headquarters. We sent them a pre-conference survey to complete, and asked them to estimate average attendance at their meetings. Most reported 25% or less, which was consistent with what we've been hearing.

During the conference, we briefly discussed how to increase meeting attendance and member participation. While no one had any "quick fix" solutions, there were some general ideas that your chapter may wish to consider:

• You mentioned holding the meeting at various times of the day. How about holding at least one meeting at a location other than a golf course? Perhaps a meeting location where no one has to serve as

the host superintendent would be less stressful. Also, it could provide a more relaxing atmosphere, but would still allow your members to be focused on association business, professional development, etc.

- You might also try a couple of theme meetings

sharing advice and tips to help fellow superintendents, and those who attend the meetings will pick up helpful tips that will benefit them.

• You also mentioned that you offer great education. Continue with a mixture of technical/agronomic topics and management issues. The California GCSA held its annual meeting last month and the educational program focused on Management in the Next Millennium and how superintendents will be impacted. (For more information

about the program, you can check out their Web site at <http://www.gcsaa.org/cgcsa/>). They've been struggling to increase attendance at their annual meeting, and although, the numbers this year weren't necessarily higher, those who attended said it was the best conference they'd ever held. They're beginning to build on this for next year.

• Everyone gets tired of surveys, but it's important to conduct some type of needs assessment to recognize and address the needs of your members. Perhaps your board could divide up the membership list and take some time to call your members. Ask them what they value most about being a member of your chapter, what they expect to get out of attending meetings (if appropriate, ask them why they're not attending meetings), and ask them what your association can do to better serve them.

• Some members may be willing to serve, but just haven't been asked. A special invitation to serve on a committee, host a meeting, or be in a charge of a small, short-term project is a great way to let them know they're a valued member of your chapter.

To: Janet Satterlee,
GCSAA Chapter Relations Manager

I am not sure if you can help me or not but here is my question. How can I improve attendance at my monthly chapter meetings? I am currently president of the Treasure Coast GCSA. I will be stepping down as president in July but as I reflect on the past year's attendance at the meetings, it is very disappointing.

I believe that I have tried the obvious: notified members as much in advance about the meeting, we have had afternoon meetings, night meetings, great education, I have even had meetings at no cost to the members and supplied dinner (about 15 showed out of nearly 85 members). Is this a trend across the US?

I know there is a lot of information out there and many ways to get it but I surely thought that the local meetings would be more well attended than this. Any suggestions that you might have would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
W. Craig Weyandt
President TCGCSA

ings. Select a specific topic and build the education and other meeting events around that topic. You could invite three or four superintendents to serve on a panel discussion about the topic.

• At the conference and show each year, innovative superintendent sessions are held. You may have attended some of these sessions where superintendents have an opportunity to share successes. Why not invite superintendents to do this at your chapter meetings? It could be just two or three minutes. They will feel good about

Advice From GCSAA

- Hold at least one meeting at a location other than a golf course.
- Try a couple of theme meetings.
- Invite superintendents to share success stories at your chapter meetings.
- Use a mixture of technical/agronomic topics and management issues for education programs.
- Have your board divide up the membership list and call each member.
- Establish a new-member committee to keep frequent contact with those who have joined within the past year or two to encourage them to participate in chapter meetings and activities.
- Maintain a file of brief, one-page profiles of each member.
- Send your newsletter to nonmember courses.
- Use E-mail to send reminders about meetings and other chapter news.
- Post a question on the chapter listserve (at the GCSAA web site) and ask how other chapters are dealing with low meeting attendance and/or member involvement.

Janet Satterlee, GCSAA Chapter Relations Manager, 1421 Research Park Drive, Lawrence, KS 66049-3859; phone (800) 472-7878, ext. 603; direct Line (785) 832-3603; fax (785) 832-4433; E-mail jsatterlee@gcsaa.org

• Does your chapter have a new member or welcome committee? This committee could divide up the list of members who have joined within the past year or two, call them and invite them to the meetings. Make a point to introduce them to other members at meetings and chapter events. Perhaps this committee could be the ones to invite members to become involved in your chapter. Also, if members are new to the area, committee members could call them periodically to see how things are going.

• You might also want to ask your members to complete a brief, one-page member profile. I will fax a sample of this to you, along with an article on "Why Join An Association?" Some of the items listed in the article don't necessarily apply to every association, but most reinforce the importance of belonging and participating in an association.

• Continue to inform your members of what's happening through your newsletter. Do you send it to nonmember courses? E-mail is another great way to send reminders about meetings and other chapter news (if a good number of your members are online). You may want to check out the GolfSolutions.com Web site and consider

using their free services to post announcements about meetings, etc.

Joel Jackson has been in touch with us recently about developing a Web site for Florida. This would be a great opportunity for every Florida chapter to post membership information, news, and other information about their chapter. (If you do visit the California Web site, you'll see that each of the local chapters has its own page).

• Finally, I'd encourage you to post a question on the chapter listserve and ask how other chapters are dealing with low meeting attendance and/or member involvement.

Here's a link to the site. If you have any difficulty posting a message, just let me know. <http://lists.ksinet.com/shellcgi/lyris.pl?site=gcsaa> Clicking on this link will bring you to a page with the GCSAA lists. Click on that, and then click on the Chapter Administrator Listserve. You'll need to type in your e-mail address, but no password is required. Then there should be an option to post a new message. Click on that button. You can type in your message and when you're finished, hit send.

I hope this information is helpful. If not, let me know, and I'll research some more information and ideas.

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