

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Steve Mona

Mona era begins in Lawrence

By HAL PHILLIPS

ATLANTA — The idea was born over an informal lunch here last August, when Steve Mona — then executive director of the Georgia State Golf Association — shared a bite with Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) President Randy Nichols, who has known Mona since 1983.

Five months later, the August luncheon has taken on historic significance: Mona is the new executive director at GCSAA, replacing the departed John Schilling.

Mona's tenure officially began Jan. 5, but his coming out party will take place in Dallas later this month, when GCSAA holds the 65th International Golf Course Conference and Show (see special section, page xx). Mona firmly believes his new job is all about creating positive relationships, and he plans to start right away.

"I'm coming into this with a mandate to work on building relationships: With our local chapters, our allied associations and the media," said Mona. "The day before the Dallas conference, Joe Baidy [who as-

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Little conflict awaits supers in Big D

By PETER BLAIS

DALLAS — It may not be all peace and harmony on the eve of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) annual meeting. But it's a darn sight quieter than during the NAFTA-like squabbles that preceded last year's vote on the proposed bylaw amendments.

Everyone may not agree with this year's proposals. But most believe the pro-

Special Show Section, pages 15-23

cess of communicating with and seeking input from members has gone much smoother than a year ago when even board member George Renault noted, "Many people feel like these [proposed changes] are being rammed down their throats."

September's meeting of chapter delegates in Lawrence, Kan., to discuss the proposals left many feeling this year's board was sincerely interested in explaining the need for the changes and seeking input from the chapter level.

Patty Knaggs, head superintendent at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. and formerly of Westchester Coun-

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Reservoir eases water pressure in California

By PETER BLAIS

HEMET, Calif. — The \$2 billion Domenigoni Valley Reservoir under construction in Southern California should help ensure water supplies for future golf course maintenance and development through the 21st century in this water-starved region.

"Knowing the reservoir is there should mean homeowners and environmentalists will put less pressure on politicians to pass bad legislation affecting irrigation water for golf courses," said

Raymond Davies, head superintendent at Virginia Country Club in Huntington Beach, Calif.

The Metropolitan Water District (MWD) project is massive. First authorized in late 1991, the 250-foot deep reservoir won't be completed until 1999. Created by three dams in the Diamond and Domenigoni valleys south of Hemet, it will be Southern California's largest lake.

The 4.5-mile-long body of water will cover nearly 4,500 acres and hold

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BEST OF THE BEST

The Virginian, a new Tom Fazio design in Bristol, Va., is one reason the architect and his firm are among the 1994 Golf Course News "Best of the Best" award winners. For Best Maintained LPGA course, Builder of the Year and more, see pages 53-57.

Chemical firms join forces in search of profit

By HAL PHILLIPS

Hoechst-Roussel and NOR-AM Chemical Co. have combined their respective agrochemical activities to create a joint venture. The Scotts Company has acquired Grace-Sierra Horticultural Products Co. from W.R. Grace & Co. DowElanco has already off-loaded a portion of its specialty chemical division to LESCO, as did Zicon Corp. following the merger of its specialty pesticide unit with Sandoz Agro Inc.

The chemical industry is reacting to the increasingly adverse economic and political environment by streamlining product lines and, ultimately, entire agrochemical divisions. With each passing day, the 1997 deadline for federal reregistration draws closer and chemical companies make more hard choices

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Executive director

Continued from page 1

sumes the presidency from Nichols this year] and I plan to walk around the floor and meet every exhibitor — or as many as is humanly possible in one day.”

Mona said he has stressed the relationship angle because he understands GCSAA has had trouble in this area. “Besides,” he said, “it’s my nature.”

Along with a different attitude, the 36-year-old Mona brings a different sort of background to the executive director’s position.

He was a journalism major in college, graduating *cum laude* from San Jose State University in California. In 1980, he began a two-year stint as tournament director for the Northern California Golf Association, then spent one year as assistant manager of press relations for the United States Golf Association.

He became executive director of the Georgia State Golf Association (GSGA) in 1983 and served in that position until accepting the GCSAA post in late November 1993.

His professional affiliation includes a term as president of the International Association of Golf Administrators

More GCSAA appointments, page 35

(IAGA), plus a seat on the IAGA board. Mona has also been a director of the National Golf Foundation (NGF).

Mona acknowledged that much of his experience lies on the “playing” side of golf. But his background does include relationships in the turfgrass industry, as well. He is a director of the Georgia Turfgrass Association and a member of its Foundation Trust.

He is a member of the advisory committee for Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College’s Turfgrass Management Program. And under his direction, the GSGA has run turfgrass scholarship programs at Baldwin and the University of Georgia.

“I’m not professing to be as connected [to the turfgrass industry] as I might be,” he said.

“But I’ve had a lot of interaction with superintendents and manufacturers. I think I have a good feel for it.

“And I’m not afraid to walk up to people and ask them what they think — then act accordingly.”

...

Mona spoke to *Golf Course News* in early December, just a day after meeting with all the GCSAA department heads at association headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. Yet he was ready to discuss his plan of action.

The new executive director has a three-step plan:

- Step 1: Put the GCSAA house in order. “I’ve thought about this a fair amount,” Mona explained, “and I think it’s important to start from within. We have to see what’s happening inside the house; how things work; how in touch we are. “With all that information, we can make adjustments as necessary. I want to make sure all 75 staff members [in Lawrence] are focused on the association members.”

- Step 2: Focus the association’s resources on its members. According to Mona, he can’t pin down particulars at this early stage.

But he did say an “important” meeting will be held in April when he, the board and department directors will “decide a strategic direction.” Certification.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

Mona appointment deemed “Peachy”

Steve Mona, the new executive director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, may not be familiar to superintendents across the country. *Golf Course News* went back to Mona’s old stomping ground, the state of Georgia, for a few testimonials. Mona served as executive director of the Georgia State Golf Association for 10 years. Representatives of the allied golf associations were also asked to comment on GCSAA’s new administrative leader.

• **KAREN WHITE, executive director of the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association:**

“They could not have picked a better person. He’s ideal for that job. Their [GCSAA’s] biggest goal, it seems to me, is public relations building with the various entities in golf — USGA, PGA, the allied associations — and the members themselves. Steve is a real people person and extremely talented... He knows the [superintendent’s] business. He’s been of tremendous support to the Georgia superintendents organization. It’s true, he’s from a different background. But he understands this end of the business, which is pretty unusual.”

• **RANDY WALDRON, superintendent at the Golf Club of Georgia, Alpharetta, Ga.:**

“I think it’s a great choice. Everything you hear about Steve is he’s very organized and very familiar with the golf industry. Everytime I’ve dealt with him, he seemed to be very informed regarding the superintendent’s responsibilities.”

• **MARK HOBAN, superintendent at The Standard Club in Duluth, Ga., immediate past president of GGCSA, president of Georgia Turf Foundation Trust and board member of the Georgia Turfgrass Association:**

“I’ve worked with him on three different boards: Georgia Turf Foundation Trust, Georgia Turfgrass Association, and the Georgia State Golf Association. As far as I’m concerned, there’s no better choice... It’s a loss for Georgia, but a gain for the national organization. He’s just an outstanding person, and I can’t believe we’re so fortunate to have him... His involvement [in the turf business] isn’t just fundraising for two turf boards. He’s worked with and managed turf people. He’s had close ties with the Georgia superintendents. He’s a world beater. Truly, I’m excited to see what he can do over the

next few years.”

• **ED KANEMASU, research leader for the Crops and Soils Department, University of Georgia:**

“Steve and I have worked together quite a bit because we have a strong turfgrass program. We were more than delighted, extremely pleased that he was selected for that position. We knew we wouldn’t be able to keep him here in Georgia for long — he’s extremely talented. But we’re delighted he went somewhere where we can keep in contact with him... He’s played a leadership role in dealing with the turfgrass associations. He’s a very good communicator. I think they made a good choice.”

• **RICK NORTON, vice president of National Golf Foundation:**

“I think it’s a terrific selection. We’ve always had nothing but the highest regard for Steve here at the National Golf Foundation. And we’re looking forward to working closely with him.”

• **PALMER MAPLES, superintendent of Summit Chase Country Club, Snellville, Ga.:**

“I think it was a good choice for several reasons: Our association with him here in Georgia has been the organization of state tournaments. The order by which information from him came to me made me feel very comfortable working with him. Very organized, very inquisitive. I’m sure he’ll ask a lot of questions and listen to your answers. Delegates his time very well. Good overall feel for the administration area in the game of golf. He knows a lot of golf people, and that’s got to be a plus for GCSAA. Happy for him, happy for the organization. And I’m sure Randy Nichols is happy.”

• **PAT O’BRIEN, Southeastern Regional director, USGA Green Section:**

“I have known Steve since 1979, when I first joined the USGA staff. I can tell you this: Steve has always been concerned at the Georgia State Golf Association championships that he had good greens, and good agronomic conditions. He kept abreast of all the latest turfgrass technology, frequently attended USGA regional meetings and Georgia Turfgrass conferences. He was also a frequent speaker at these conferences. I also remember seeing him at the Georgia Golf Course Superintendent Association meetings. A true friend of the superintendent. Always very interested in the problems they face.”

Employment.

Field Service...

These three issues will all be addressed, said Mona, who noted that ballot results from Dallas will weigh heavily on decisions made come April.

“The first priority has to be the current membership,” he said. “Once we’ve done that, *then* we can talk about other issues.”

- Step 3: Other issues, namely membership expansion and international operations.

Mona acknowledged that both subjects have been contentious and divisive for the association, as evidenced by the bylaw defeat in Anaheim last year and the closing down of GCSAA’s Singapore office.

He said it is far too early to commit himself on either issue — but he did admit an interest in the Asia-Pacific arena. “I’d hate to see the international venture go up in smoke,” he said.

The expansion of GCSAA membership categories, defeated in 1993, is back on the ballot in 1994. “If some of those bylaw changes are approved [in Dallas], there could be some real potential for growth,” said Mona.

...

Before their August lunch in Atlanta, Mona said he didn’t know the GCSAA job was open. Further, Mona said he wasn’t aware of any internal problems at GCSAA headquarters. By now, he’s well aware of the divisions in Lawrence — and he’s prepared to address them.

“There’s no question there are some issues inside the building that need to be addressed: Morale, personnel, direction, etc. I’m not naive.

“But at the same time, I think there are good people and situations that can be fixed. During my time in Lawrence, the dedication and skill of the staff was confirmed in capital letters.

“The larger point, despite what has happened here, is the image of GCSAA has been very good.

“The organization has done a great job — I mean, the reputation of the members has risen dramatically over the years. And I want that to continue.”

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