

Dual membership? Beware the hype

Never accuse the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) of sugar-coating. The latest example? An article appearing in the GCSAA's newsletter, *Newsline*, which attempts to answer the question posed by its headline; "Why a dual-membership requirement?"

The author, incoming association President Bruce Williams, says there are three groups of potential GCSAA members. The first group?

"Those who do not want to join, no matter what the cost," Williams writes. "These individuals have no interest in advancing their profession, and they are also true threats to our profession. Neither GCSAA nor the chapters should let these individuals direct our actions or efforts."

Threats to our profession?

Geez, Bruce, that's a touch heavy-handed; especially when GCSAA has never offered its membership any opposing views — any cons to balance its chorus of pros — on the subject of a dual-membership requirement. Despite what you may have read about the September 1995 Chapter Delegates Meeting in Lawrence, there are members in good standing who oppose aspects of the membership bylaw change [see this month's guest commentary on opposite page].

Don't get me wrong: A dual-membership requirement — whereby superintendents would be required to join both their local chapters and GCSAA national, or neither — would definitely strengthen the superintendents' position in the golf universe. That's good. Superintendents have made great strides over the past 20 years and for that we can primarily thank GCSAA, which has done a creditable job promoting the profession as just that, a profession.

But make no mistake: The current "debate" (if we can call it that) over dual membership has nothing to do with cooperation and everything to do with power, a point about which the association makes no bones. You can't create a stronger GCSAA without diluting the power of affiliated chapters.

Individual chapters have specific needs more easily addressed on the local level. The proposed bylaw change would make it harder for smaller chapters to operate, which makes them anxious. For example, the new bylaw would impose a more structured formula on local chapters — not just regarding membership, but regarding who can serve as local chapter officers and board members.

These are not stumbling-block issues. They can be resolved. But it's unfortunate that GCSAA has not given a public voice to these concerns. It's more troubling the association has seen fit to label dissenters and those not interested in joining GCSAA as "threats to our profession."

In case you missed it:

Architect Roger Rulewich has left Robert Trent Jones Sr. to form his own design firm, The Golf Group (TGG), based in Bernardston, Mass. [Because we received word just before the January issue went to press, the staff here was able to

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Letters

USGA: A GOV'T AGENCY?

To the editor:

I'm confused. When I'm at a new golf course, I always see the course's rating up on the wall, as given by the United States Golf Association. However, when looking through my government manuals, I can never find the address for USGA.

My friends and business associates all contend the USGA is a governmental body, and do not like my differing with them. They say their course is rated in the top 25 by the USGA, and it probably is. But dare I say that it's a standard by which the association itself has invented and not some act of Congress? They get visibly perturbed and think I'm some kind of anti-government protester.

I'm just trying to make a point.

To confuse me further, though, my friend who works for the federal government wonders why, if the USGA is not a government agency, can it represent itself with the exact same seal and logo as the Great Seal of the United States? Good question. I think if you polled all of the active golfers in the United States, the vast majority would think the USGA is a governmental agency to where their tax dollars go. I am certain the rest of the golfing world outside America feels this way, as well.

Why am I so adamant about making the distinction that the USGA is not a governmental body? Because if my friends, business associates and the rest of the golfing world think it is, no wonder golf gets such a bad rap as a sport for the rich and

Supers struggle to keep pace with technology, information

And so the Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it."

My, we've come a long way — from merely "taking care of it" to studying the effects of temperature on turf, leaf wetness duration and inoculum concentration on infection of annual bluegrass by *Colletotrichum graminicola*. Scientists say mankind's storehouse of knowledge has doubled in just the last four years. Just as that is happening in the world as a whole, so too is it occurring in the little realm of golf. While university researchers are delving into the mysteries of turfgrass and its care, the application of the knowledge we have is being spread globally. And this is being done by my pick for Heroes of the Year: American golf course superintendents and university agronomists.

Former Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) President Mel Lucas relates the leap in greenkeeping knowledge in Europe (where he often consults) to that between his dad's time as a greenkeeper and the 1990s. "Today, in Europe, they are at those [same] doorsteps," said Lucas, who is involved in projects in Austria and Hungary. Going from very little knowledge to "having all the great equipment that they have to work with now, it's mind-boggling for them. They're piling the last 70 years of advancement all into the first or second year of their infancy."

"With the computer age of irrigation and the marvelous hydraulics we have now, we're virtually seeing the greenkeeper of the teens and '20s being thrust into our generation of managing golf courses. It's exciting to make that all happen."

"The same thing is occurring in Mexico," said Dave Fleming, a certified golf course superintendent who is designing courses south of the border.

But, whereas many foreign superintendents are "frighteningly uneducated," Fleming added: "From 10 years ago to today, they've caught up 20 to 30 years of knowledge. And they'll do the same in the next 10 years. This information is getting to them at break-neck speed and they're getting better and better."

From the university researchers performing the scientific studies to the associations, companies and golfers funding these efforts; to the superintendents fine-tuning those findings by their field work; to those adventurers disseminating all that information to other nooks and crannies of the world — our hats go off.

...

Meanwhile, in the midst of this explosion of knowledge and technology, some of the old-time superintendents are being left behind. Many superintendents retire from their full-time positions but continue to keep a hand in the business by working on grounds crews or as mechanics.

"Unfortunately, there are those retiring superintendents who have found themselves to be unmarketable in today's high-tech golf world," said Richie Valentine, a turf consultant after four decades as superintendent at Merion Golf Club.

Also unfortunate is that retired superintendents often must stay

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