

## Letters

### MODEST PUBLIC COURSE OWNERS ARE 'THE REAL HEROES'

To the editor:

Hooray and three cheers for Mr. Ed Schnurr, the owner of Gun Ridge Golf Course in Hastings, Mich. [Letters, April GCN]. His response to the Nicklaus February 1996 Guest Commentary was pure and right on the mark.

I have been in golf all my life as a club professional, owner of a 9-hole mountain course and custom golf club builder. I can tell you that the many people I know in golf are of one collective opinion on the work of Mr. Jack Nicklaus. This common-sense view is of a man who designs and builds the most blatantly over-elaborate course that he can in order to extract the largest fee. These courses are impractical and very costly to maintain. Also, if you are not scratch or better you are not in for fun afternoon.

All this aside, it is very apparent that the accumulated wealth of this man has completely removed him from the reality of millions, who have an annual recreational budget of two to five hundred dollars. It is a flat shame that this man's outstanding playing record is allowing him to be a trendsetter in an area where he has little knowledge at all. This area is, of course, public golf — and guess what? You don't need to spend millions of dollars building one golf course and move tens of thousands of yards of earth in order to have a pretty, pleasant and enjoyable course to play on!

In this "culture of excesses"

that we live in, the real heroes of golf are the Ed Schnurrs of this world and not "the big bucks accumulators".

Douglas W. Jetter  
Clayton, N.C.

### RYEGRASS CROP SUFFERS

To the editor:

A series of unrelated, detrimental events in Oregon's Willamette Valley during the past few months has thrown the prospects for an acceptable 1996 perennial ryegrass crop into a tailspin.

Strong demand over the past two years has sent production and consumption numbers soaring, with prospects that most warehouses will be empty of any carryover stocks by June of this year. This will place unusual pressure on the 1996 crop which looks like it will not be sufficient to supply the demand that has developed over the last several years.

Troubles started last fall, when 3-year and older stands of perennial ryegrass began to show injury due to the activity of soil residual herbicides, the effects of which were amplified by weather extremes after planting. Oregon State University extension service reported at that time that their estimates were that 20 percent of the established perennial ryegrass production fields were severely injured. Later, the worst infestation of "slugs" that the valley has ever seen attacked part of the crop with very few controls available in time to prevent damage. Whole fields of perennial

ryegrass were completely decimated by the slugs and had to be plowed.

In early January, the herbicide/slug damage had been determined to encompass the entire production area in the Willamette Valley. Estimate at that time were that 50 percent of the crop was in excellent condition, and the other 50 percent appeared to have anywhere from 10 to 90 percent damage!

As if this weren't enough bad news, the great flood of 1996 occurred the first week of February. The Willamette River, which is one of the few rivers in the world that flows south to north, was deluged with over 10 inches of rain and melting snow. This created the worst flooding in 30 years, with hundreds of millions of dollars in damages to property, livestock and production fields of all agricultural commodities. Eighteen Oregon counties were declared disaster areas, with over 750 road closures due to high water.

Post-flooding inspection of fields revealed a mixed bag for damages. If a field was along a river that overflowed its banks, it depended how long the field was underwater as to the depth of the silt deposits. Some fields that were completely covered in silt already had re-growth showing through after the water had receded. Actual flood damage appeared to be minimal with some spotty. But when coupled with the earlier chemical and slug damage, a pall has been cast over the remaining potential for

the 1996 harvest.

Even with ideal conditions between now and harvest, we are quite sure that perennial ryegrass supplies will be extremely tight, and prices will be trending stronger and higher than they have for years.

Steve Tubbs, president  
Turf Merchants, Inc.  
Tangent, Ore.

### GRASSCRAFT RESPONDS

To the editor:

We felt it was necessary to respond to a recent letter to the editor from Precision's Andy Masclarella in your March issue. Andy states that "Flymo's have been manufactured at their Florida plant for over 5 years." It's important to understand the difference between manufactured and assembled in the U.S. It's common knowledge that Flymo (located 4,000 miles away in northern England) manufactures Flymo parts and ships them overseas to Precision in Florida. Precision probably does some assembly of those parts at their facility. We noticed their advertisements state "Assembled in the U.S.A.," not "Manufactured in the U.S.A." Grasscraft, on the other hand, is totally manufactured (i.e. parts are made in the U.S.A.) and we assemble at our Portland, Maine, facility.

Masclarella goes on to state that Flymo offers the lowest prices in the industry. That's probably right if you're buying their residential-use 12- or 15-inch models. In reality, if you

compare Grasscrafts 19-inch trimmer to Flymo's most popular 20-inch model you'll find a considerable difference in price. Flymo's model cost \$795 plus accessories while the comparable Grasscraft can be purchased for \$675. In addition to significant savings the Grasscraft trimmer includes a 5-horsepower engine while the Flymo only comes with a 3.5 horsepower engine.

We were also surprised to find that Masclarella doesn't seem to know the difference between a 2-cycle and a 4-cycle engine. It may be true that his mini-mow GCT 12 operates at 6,000 RPMs but that doesn't translate into more power. You see, a small engine must operate at higher RPMs to generate the same power as a larger horsepower engine operating at lower RPMs. A 2-hp engine screaming at 6,000 RPMs seems excessive to us and may explain the short life span of the GCT12 Flymo for commercial applications.

One of the biggest complaints we hear every day is the cost and availability of imported British-made parts. You see, it takes weeks for a shipment of parts to arrive from England, while Grasscraft parts can be shipped 2-day air if necessary. Our goal at Grasscraft is to provide a more durable, longer lasting, dependable hover mower and to back it up with good service and competitive prices.

Dave Rodway  
VP, Sales & Marketing  
Grasscraft, Inc.  
Portland, Maine

### GCSAA PRESIDENT TAKES ISSUE WITH COLUMN

To the editor:

Your editorial in the February edition was most disappointing to those of us who have been working for years to strengthen the superintendent's profession. You could not be farther from the facts when you say, "You can't create a stronger GCSAA without diluting the power of affiliated chapters." We believe the exact opposite: It is impossible to strengthen GCSAA without strengthening affiliated chapters!

Most requirements are the same as they were before; we will just be enforcing them across the board. These requirements are designed to make sure that all our chapters are strong, stable and able to provide good, meaningful programs for their members.

We have had true and honest debate about all the issues related to our new affiliation agreement, and not just limited to the dual membership requirement. You did not attend the Chapter Relations Meeting last September, nor any of the Chapter Relations Committee meetings, nor probably any of the many chapter meetings around the country dedicated to discussing these issues in detail. There has been a great deal of lively debate on this issue over the past two years. Finally, the time came to put it to a vote and decide a direction, rather than hem-hawing clear into the

21st century. The Board of Directors was pleased with the overwhelming support for this change at the Feb. 10 election.

Your accusation of heavy-handedness surprised me. Perhaps the media are more careful in distinguishing between *The National Enquirer* and *Golf Course News* when discussing the journalistic profession than they are in distinguishing among golf course superintendents. But when a poorly managed golf course has an environmental disaster, the media are typically quite heavy-handed in degrading the entire profession. In my estimation, these non-GCSAA, non-chapter members are a threat to our profession.

Personally, I haven't heard non-GCSAA, non-chapter superintendents speak out on these issues at all. Apparently, superintendents who don't care enough to join GCSAA or their local chapter don't care how GCSAA and the affiliated chapters conduct their affairs.

The dual membership requirement will eventually force would-be fence-sitters to decide whether they want to be in or out. (Those who are currently a member of either a chapter or GCSAA can sit on the fence forever. The dual membership requirement will apply only to new joiners after July 1, 1997.) This cannot realistically be construed as an issue of money or elitism. Even for a superintendent making only

\$20,000 a year, the combined dues would be about 2 percent, or less, of the annual salary. It is truly an issue of commitment.

Those who do care enough to dissent are certainly welcome in our association, and we welcome their viewpoints. We need all kinds of feedback, including contrarian, to keep us aware of where we are, and where we want to be.

Bruce R. Williams  
President, GCSAA  
Lawrence, Kan.

*Ed. — As for the weakening of affiliate chapters, clearly dual-membership will strengthen GCSAA membership while weakening those of state and regional organizations. We can agree there are superintendents — let's call them independents — who will want to belong to local chapters but not to GCSAA. By mandating these individuals make a choice — join both groups or neither — two eventualities will take place: 1) GCSAA will gain members, as a portion of the independents will surely deem it worthwhile to join national — as much for the benefits of GCSAA membership as for the right to retain their local affiliation; and 2) Local associations will lose potential members, as some of these independents will decide it's not worthwhile to shell out national dues for something they've already decided they don't want or can't afford. Indeed, as independents before the Feb. 10 vote, they had already decided it wasn't worthwhile. Further, fence-*

*sitters aren't grandfathered "forever." As we all know, superintendents move from job to job with great frequency. When and if a super moves to a new course and wants to join a new chapter, the dual-membership requirement kicks in.*

*• Are these independents "threats to the profession"? As I indicated in my February column, I think it's unfair to label these superintendents as "threats". I don't think Mr. Williams really believes they are. I think he indulged in a bit of politicking before the vote, which is the point I tried to convey in my column. Besides, everyone will agree there are thousands of perfectly able superintendents in America who don't belong to GCSAA. Indeed, with about 7,000 Class A members, GCSAA represents less than half the head superintendents now working in this country. I'm sure Mr. Williams didn't mean to imply that more than half the supers at the country's 15,000 golf courses are threats to their profession. Surely he didn't mean to imply non-GCSAA members are unfit to look after their golf courses. Besides, if these "threatening" non-GCSAA superintendents were to pay their \$200 membership dues, would they instantly become more competent? As I said, I don't think Mr. Williams believes that. I think he was trying to influence voters. And I believe it was heavy-handed.*

*• Mr. Williams also seems to imply that environmental disas-*

*ters can't happen at courses where GCSAA members are in charge. This is also unfair. Accidents can happen anywhere. Through education — most of it GCSAA-sponsored — many can be prevented. But there are plenty of independents who are fanatical about furthering their own education. Indeed, that's why GCSAA accommodates non-members at its educational sessions.*

*• Having spoken to those who were in Lawrence last September, I believe there was a true and honest debate at the Chapter Relations Meeting. However, the pros and cons voiced during that "lively debate" were never shared with the GCSAA membership in Golf Course Management or Newsline. Readers got only the pros, the party line. Further, were there non-GCSAA chapter representatives present at the September meeting? If not, it would have been hard for them to engage Mr. Williams on these issues.*

*• Finally, dues certainly do represent a financial issue. Mr. Williams says in his letter that it's not about money or elitism. But there's no denying that GCSAA members are largely employed by private clubs — clubs that often pay those association dues as a condition of employment. Insisting that a daily-fee or municipal superintendent pony up \$200 as a sign of commitment, especially when a huge percentage of GCSAA members get what is essentially a free ride, is ingenuine.*