

November 2006

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COURSE NEWS

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up for sale

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EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Golf Course News reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course News* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.

Tired of losing money on every payroll?

EMPLOYEE TIMESHEET

NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 11-15

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Brentw.1		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00	↓		8 1/2
THU			4:00	Brentw.2		8 1/2
FRI	↓	↓	4:00	↓		8 1/2

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2



Reality?

Employee Report

Kemp, Bill Date Range: 12/11/2006 through 12/15/2006

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	12/11	Brentwood 1	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Placing The Pin	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Bunker	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	12/12	Brentwood 1	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Placing The Pin	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Mowing	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	12/13	Brentwood 1	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Placing The Pin	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Bunker	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	12/14	Brentwood 2	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Placing The Pin	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Bunker	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	12/15	Brentwood 2	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Placing The Pin	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Mowing	2:55	7:49 hours

Signature: Bill Kemp Kemp, Bill

Total 38:53 hours



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ONLINE-ONLY ARTICLES:

KEEP YOUR GUARD UP

Plant pathologists provide recommendations for golf course superintendents this fall to help prevent and suppress turfgrass diseases that appear during the spring.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

Members of the Golf Course Builders Association of America shed light on the benefits of belonging to the organization.



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Kevin Gilbride
Publisher

It's all about you

Other than my family, I have three passions in life: publishing a well-read and respected magazine, downhill skiing and, of course, the challenging game of golf.

Since GIE Media relaunched *Golf Course News* in 2004, GCN has been a labor of love. GIE has been a leader in the green industry for decades thanks to our award-winning sister publication, *Lawn & Landscape*, so we knew we had to publish a first-rate magazine. To do that right, we had to make the magazine all about you. We needed to understand what you really needed, wanted and absolutely had to know.

To accomplish our goal, we spent a lot of time talking to superintendents, owners and managers at golf courses throughout the country. We quickly learned the old GCN and other industry publications weren't delivering what you really wanted. We found that in today's fast-changing marketplace, you yearned to keep up to date on news as often as possible. So, our solution was not only to deliver a solid, traditional print product, but also to use the Web and e-mail to our advantage and deliver you the information you need weekly and daily.

This decision wasn't made on a whim. Actually, there were some internal disagreements about the frequency of a regular e-newsletter. But you said you wanted quick updates online and a print publication that provides you with in-depth knowledge, ideas and opinions to give you various perspectives about the business.

So, we stuck to our guns and delivered an e-newsletter, which includes original features as well as all the breaking news stories you need to know about, and our Web site, which is updated daily. It's been a tremendous success. In fact, 37,000 folks visit www.golfcoursenews.com monthly to check out our news, digital edition and other content on the site.

During our research, we also found readers wanted more information about business issues other than agronomy. That's why GCN also delivers more industry news, development updates, construction and remodeling case studies, marketing ideas and business strategy stories faster and better than any other magazine in the market. In short, we listened and responded to you. You told us the golf market was changing, and

you wanted the publications you read to change. So we did.

That concept isn't too different from the changes that evolved in the ski industry about 15 years ago. Traditional ski resorts suddenly were besieged with teenagers who slid down the mountain on snowboards instead of skis. At first, the resorts hated these rebellious upstarts who saw mountains as a different kind of challenge. But quickly, their disdain turned into dollars as they realized that "those darned kids" were the future of the business and a great new source of revenue. The ski resorts evolved and prospered.

At GCN, we concentrate on the fact that golf is a business and success requires that same kind of evolution. That means innovation, creativity and an unwavering focus on a few simple goals: presenting a resourceful product, attracting and retaining customers, and carving out a profit in a competitive market. Every article we print and everything we do is predicated on that idea.

I'm extremely fortunate to have a team of editors, writers and columnists who are connected to the industry like no one else, including John Walsh, Heather Wood, Pat Jones, Kevin Ross, Terry Buchen, Jim McLoughlin and Jeff Brauer. We're proud that each issue of the magazine features thinkers who offer more than 100 years of real-world experience, global perspective and industry insight. And, I hope you agree the ideas they put into print help you succeed in your business.

That said, I want to emphasize something that ties to my original premise: being passionate about listening to readers. As publisher – and in the magazine world that means "the buck stops here" – I also want to hear from you. What do you like about GCN? What do you hate? What topics and ideas are you really interested in?

I want you to e-mail me, call me or write me a good old-fashioned letter – my contact information is in the masthead on page 8. My promise is that you'll get a response – no matter what you have to say, good or bad. That's because I have one more passion: making sure *Golf Course News* is the best source of useful information in today's market and that we never stop listening to readers. That's because it's all about you. GCN

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



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Seniority matters

After reading Bob Milligan's article, "Suggested reading," (in the September issue on page 22), I thought about a situation regarding two of my employees.

Employee A has worked for us for about five years, and employee B has worked for us for three years. Last year, employee A left the grounds crew in early September to work in the clubhouse and didn't complete the season with us. He returned this spring to continue working on the grounds crew. Employee B has worked three complete seasons for us, spring to fall.

This fall, because of budget constraints, we've reduced employee B's hours, and he works part time now. We plan to release him at the end of the month. Employee A still is employed full time and will continue to work until the end of the season. Employee B is upset that employee A is full time when employee A quit last year to work in another department. Employee A has been with us longer and has seniority over employee B, but employee B doesn't see it that way because employee A left last season.

These are Latino employees, and seniority always seems to be a factor with them. I always have to be careful when I hire them back in the spring, so I bring them back according to when they were hired, or else they seem to be offended greatly.

Do you have any advice on how to handle employee B?

Jeff Johnson
Golf course superintendent
The Minikahda Club
Minneapolis, Minn.

Milligan's response:

The key to employee management is to treat employees fairly. In addition to accepting that some decisions, no matter how well thought out or sound, have undesirable consequences, I have three suggestions. First, reiterate formally

and informally to employee B why you made the decision. Acknowledge that his perception is valid but not the one you chose. Second, be patient. Employee B's feelings are genuine and not entirely unreasonable. Additional positive feedback and coaching would be in order. Third, be clear with employee B that the decision has been made, and although his feelings are valid, they aren't an excuse for reduced job performance or for behaviors or statements that are detrimental to the club.

Play your course

I'm responding to John Walsh's editorial, "Play more golf," in the September issue (on page 6). I work for a private club, and it's important for me to play the course once a week. How can one experience playing conditions without playing?

It's important for superintendents to play their course with the right intentions. You shouldn't act like you own a membership and invite a lot of buddies out for a round. My advice is to be discrete and try to play with some members. It's a great opportunity to show them your dedication to the property and your concern for the playability of the course.

This practice will help us with the balance of agronomic requirements and playability.

David Major, CGCS
Shady Canyon Golf Club
Dana Point, Calif.

Learning opportunities

Jim McLoughlin wrote a great column in the September issue ("Unprepared," page 20). Admittedly, I don't read it every month, but after reading this past month's article, I'm excited about him coming to Chicago in February when he will present his career planning workshop.

There are many people I talk to who become complacent. People need to make everything a learning opportunity, regardless of the situation.

John Ekstrom
Assistant golf course superintendent
Hinsdale Golf Club
Clarendon Hills, Ill.

Correction

John Reger is the head golf professional at Haile Plantation Golf & Country Club in Gainesville, Fla. The information was incorrect in the "Spurring more ideas" marketing column on page 14 of the October issue. GCN

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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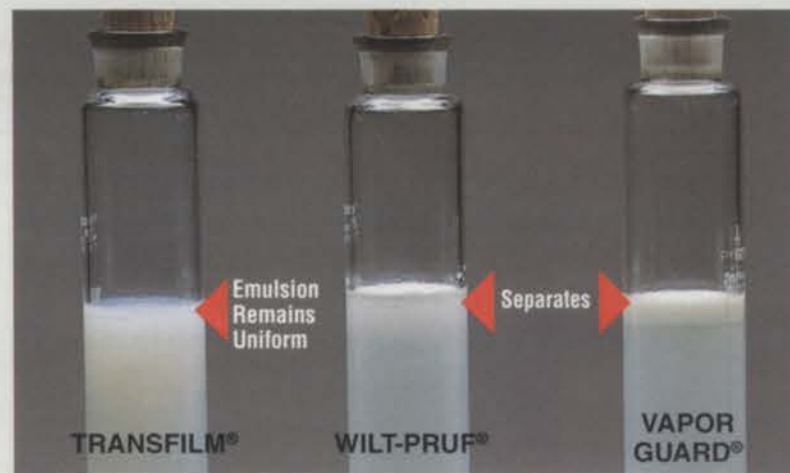


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Boosting the bottom line



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

This year, I introduced you to several insiders and their marketing insights into this wonderful world that is our golf course industry. But looking back on the columns, they all revolve around one common theme: increasing revenue at your facility.

In January, I challenged you to think outside the box with ideas and a marketing formula: The four Ps: price, product, promotion and place (location). The intent was to urge you to think differently about your business and ask your customers what else they might want while they spend five, six or more hours at your golf facility. There are no pat answers or offerings.

Your core business – a golf course product in exchange for green fees and cart fees – is still your most important offering, but could you also provide services in demand without interfering with your core business? Most new revenue-generating ideas will come from your patrons. Ask them what other products or services they'd be willing to pay for while enjoying their time on your golf course.

I've been to progressive public-access golf courses that offer dry cleaning, car detailing, valet parking, business services for Realtors, gift shopping, wireless Internet, vegetarian-only menus, movie pick-up, babysitting, family meals-to-go, grocery pick-up, banking, and a host of other services some people would gladly pay a premium for while they play golf. I'm not saying you need to offer non-golf-related services, just consider the opportunities for your club and patrons.

The time it takes to play the game continues to be a hurdle to incremental

play at most golf courses. Some ingenious operators found creative ways to offer services that save their patrons time while they play. Ask your patrons what they want. If enough say the same thing, offer it.

In February's column, I addressed aggregate rounds. Too many sources with not enough information were consistently reporting rounds were down month after month. Since 2003, I found, in most markets, individual courses reported rounds had been stagnant or declined. But that wasn't so for the market as a whole. In most markets, new courses were added or additions were made to existing courses, which dilutes rounds played per hole. Know how your market is faring with aggregate rounds to prepare your upcoming marketing strategies.

In March, Stuart Lindsay with Edgehill Consulting/Pelucid enlightened us on the projected positive effect Baby Boomers will have on the increase of rounds played in the future. He also questioned the effect Gen-Xers are projected to have, which isn't as good as the Boomers' effect.

In April, I discussed how to hire a consultant. If you're thinking about hiring a consultant, review the column online, print it and save it. My observations can help you find a qualified consultant.

May's column was more than an introduction to e-marketing. Phil Wiggins, owner of Wiggins' Golf Consulting, was a valuable resource. If you've resolved to get more involved with e-marketing, he has some great ideas.

But possibly the best marketing suggestions for generating revenue were detailed in my July column. The best resource you have for making relevant decisions to increase revenue will come from your patrons. Involve them and ask them for their assistance via formal member surveys and player surveys. I gave you specific instructions of how to conduct both, along with the topics to be included in each survey. If you aren't surveying your patrons, you might be making critical business decisions blindly.

For my August column, I summarized some concise marketing thoughts about

player development curriculums. That I had e-mailed to clients, past clients and a few industry insiders. Mike Kahn, owner of GolfMAK wrote back curtly: "We need 1,000 new courses or get rid of 3,000." He piqued my marketing curiosity, and subsequently I had a two-hour brunch with him. Almost the entire column is a compilation of his thoughts about introducing players to the game. Mike is a 50-year industry veteran. I respect his differing opinions, and I hope you did, too.

My October column was actually a continuation of September's column. If you retrieve these two columns from the GCN archives online and read them together, they'll provide you with plenty of course positioning, branding, revenue-generating

and promotion ideas for next year.

As we close 2006, I hope you notice a continuing thread throughout these marketing columns: The most successful operators I've had

the chance to assist are those who realize they have to view their golf facility as more than a golf course, pro shop, restaurant and driving range. It's a recreation, entertainment and customer service business. Your business. For the most part, you have a captive audience, or one that can be captured, if you do everything possible to make their experience at your club more endearing. To do so in today's environment of competing recreational interests and time-challenged patrons, you most likely will need to think outside the box and provide them with what they want or need make it easy for them to play golf more often – at your course instead of your competition's.

Can you think about your golf facility as a business rather than a golf course? If your customer is going to, say, have breakfast, warm up, play golf, divvy up the bets over lunch and maybe have a beer or two with good friends, he'll be spending six or seven hours at your place of business. How might you provide your customers the comfort to stay that long? Think customer service. At first glance that "service" might not appear to be about golf. But think again. It's all about golf. It's all about your business. GCN

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OPERATORS ... ARE THOSE WHO REALIZE THEY HAVE TO VIEW THEIR GOLF FACILITY AS MORE THAN A GOLF COURSE ...

Think outside the box

Here's an exercise that might help you think outside the box. Place a pen on one of the dots and without lifting your pen, draw four straight lines that will connect all the dots. For the solution, turn to page 49.





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Jeffrey D. Brauer is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at jeff@jeffreydbrauer.com.

Bunker design strategy

Recently, I was asked a simple question that has a complicated answer: "How did you decide to put a bunker there?" While it seems intuitive, there's a logical thought process.

I usually have a target number of bunkers based on course type or construction and maintenance costs. Within those parameters, I view potential bunker locations in terms of natural land forms and the ability to serve multiple functions. Then I consider aesthetics, variety and maintenance. The process is repeated.

Land forms

Golfers should see the hazards affecting play. Attractive bunkers are great visual design elements, so why hide them? Achieving visibility requires bunkers to slope toward a golfer's view, so a natural bunker location is one where the natural upward slope faces the golfer. Building up the ground for bunkers is possible on flat or even reverse-sloped ground; but they rarely look as good or natural as ones cut into an existing slope, so I build most of my bunkers where slopes naturally provide visibility with minimal earthwork.

Greens built into hillsides usually result in bunker-friendly slopes on the low side, as well as the high side in some cases. Building greens on raised fill pads on flat sites usually creates good bunker slopes, providing the green shape allows the bunkers to partially face the fairway for visibility. I rarely put bunkers behind moderately elevated fill-pad greens or any green built on a reverse slope because those backing bunkers rarely catch shots, limiting their usefulness.

Usefulness

Many aesthetic but out-of-play bunkers have been removed from golf courses and should continue to be removed, especially given the increased standards and bunker maintenance costs. Generally, fewer bunkers are being built compared to a decade ago because fewer courses can afford numerous or random bunkers built purely for aesthetics. In most cases, bunkers should affect play directly and provide aesthetics, safety, drainage and environmental protection. Where multiple opportunities don't exist or where water, specimen trees or unique contours exist, I won't use bunkers. I'll save them for areas devoid of natural features to create similar play interest.

Strategy

Hazards should create strategy for good players by placing green and fairway bunkers that relate shots to each other. Following a classic strategic design, fairway and green bunkers are placed on opposite sides of a hole, encouraging players to flirt with fairway bunkers to open the green on the approach. Good strategies can be developed using different bunker relationships, so finding a design that works using mostly natural bunker locations isn't too difficult.

Rather than follow the tried-and-true method of bunker left/bunker right, I prefer mixing bunkers with other hazards to make golfers think about where to miss, while offering a variety of recovery shots suited to differently skilled players.

Bunkers usually are more visually dominant than grass hazards, and I use them where I want visual stop signs, intimidation through size or depth, or distance perception.

Difficulty and speed of play

Once an architect was told club members had difficulty getting out of the bunkers he designed on their course. The architect apparently didn't consider the difficulty and speed-of-play issues most courses face.

Challenge and difficulty are distinct. Feathering a six-iron fade to a tucked pin technically is the same challenge whether the bunker is two- or 20-foot deep. Fortunately, bunkers don't need to be excessively deep. While some contend short approach shots suggest deeper bunkers proportionally punish missed shots, most prefer all greenside bunkers to be shallow enough to see the pin.

Similarly, locating hazards in areas frequented only by average golfers – specifically slice side sand bunkers short of the green – also slows play. Leftside bunkers should outnumber rightside bunkers considerably.

Aesthetics and psychology

If artistically arranged and well located, bunkers frame holes and greens, act as directional devices and lead the eye. Bunkers built without proper support, behind trees or on a hill are partially hidden and less attractive and shouldn't be built. Bunkers visually covering the fairway or green often make holes feel less comfortable while slowing play. Why force bunkers in where

they don't fit?

Generally, small spaces require small bunkers or a consideration of other hazards. Single bunkers usually need attractive or dramatic shaping. Where room permits, bunker clusters are attractive and different if they're randomly spaced.

Variety

Golf holes look too much alike more often than they look too different, often because of the notion that similar bunkers create a theme.

Bunkers should have a style, but within that style I favor creating visual variety by varying bunkers in number, size, pattern and placement. I purposely design some fairways and greens without bunkers and others with several. I alternate from lightly to heavily bunkered holes. If the construction budget or course type demands it, several greens or fairways will have one bunker only. I strive for variety, combining sand with other types of hazards.

Review and repeat

The short version of the bunker design process is:

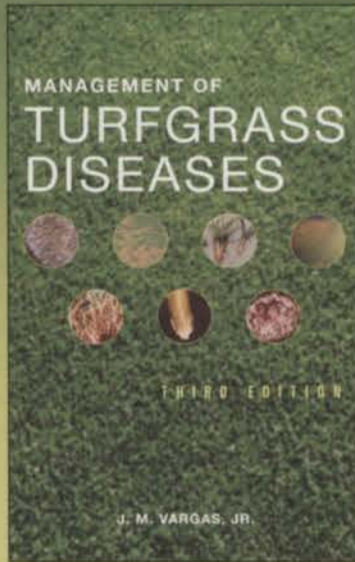
1. Decide how many you want.
2. Find natural landforms that cry out for bunkers. Make the most of those.
3. Find areas where bunkers serve strategic, aesthetic and other useful purposes.
4. Use less natural but workable areas to create man-made variety.
5. Avoid using indifferent locations that cause excessive difficulty, maintenance problems or slow play.
6. In special cases, ignore rules one, three, four and five.
7. Review the plan and tweak it to assure the course has bunkers and they won't cause excessive difficulty or slow play.

I repeat steps two through six several times until, paraphrasing Charles Blair Macdonald, "I am confident they are perfect and beyond criticism." But that never happens.

Architects have lower "batting averages" than Major League Baseball players when it comes to bunkers, as more courses have redesigned bunkers throughout time than not. Because bunkers generate so much debate and discussion, they have survived golf's migration from their natural environs of the Scottish links land to remain a staple of golf course design. GCN

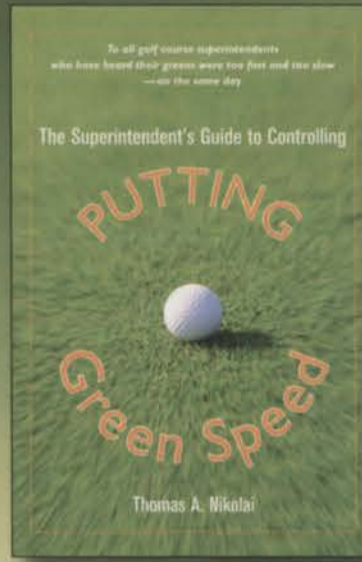
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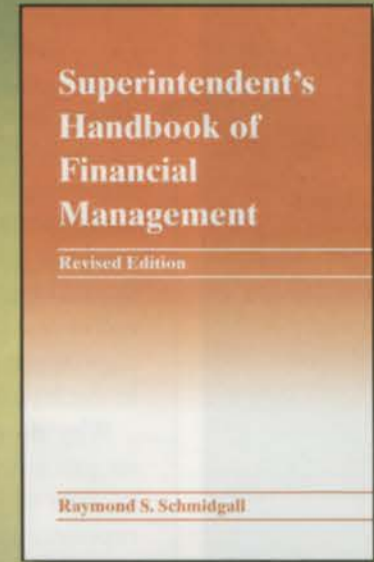
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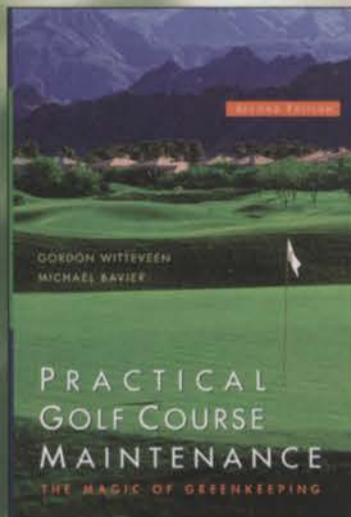
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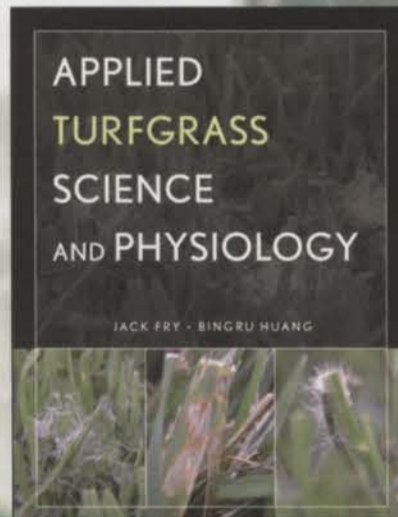
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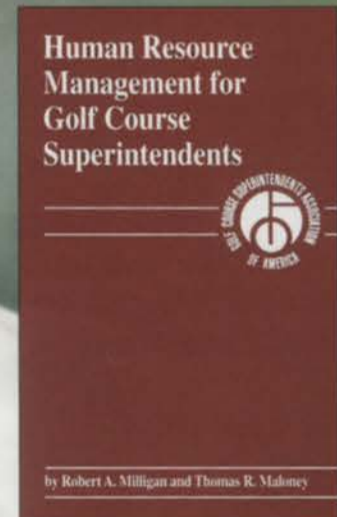
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Profession neglect



Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@adelphia.net or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcoursenews.com.

Few challenge the concept that the golf course superintendent is the most, if not the only, essential individual working at golf course properties, where the success and welfare of each golf course program is unequivocally determined by how well the golf course superintendent performs his/her job. The troubling question every GCSAA member should be asking is: Why if the individual golf course superintendent is held in such high esteem isn't the profession itself held in similar esteem?

Why do superintendents have to ask for privileges that are extended routinely to sister professionals in golf? Why are superintendents granted written contract security less frequently than sister professionals? Why do superintendents attend fewer board meetings than sister professionals? Why is it generally acceptable for golf course superintendents to be summarily dismissed, but unacceptable for sister professionals to be similarly dismissed? When was the last time we saw a golf professional or club manager locked out of his/her office and/or denied access to course property? Why do superintendents have to fight for fair separation packages when dismissed when sister professionals don't?

Some might think only the less experienced and more vulnerable superintendents suffer the above indignities. This isn't the case, however, because for more than 20 years, I've watched the very best superintendents get pushed around with equal impunity. Why does a 2004 Golf Course News survey indicate that 58 percent of the most essential individuals working at the nation's golf courses do not feel secure in their jobs? Could there be a greater disconnect?

The definitive reasons why superintendents are shown the lack of respect the above rhetorical questions depict are: (1.) because the golf course superintendent profession hasn't effectively dealt with these issues; and (2.) because if employers know they can get away with it, they'll continue to do it until the root causes of the problem are addressed.

The two root causes why the golf course superintendents' profession has failed to gain the national respect it deserves are:

First, no one represents the profession

per se to ensure it's presented in the proper light. I realize most people, including GCSAA members, believe that because the vast majority of superintendents and assistants are GCSAA members, the association represents the profession. However, this is a misread because the GCSAA is a membership organization that by definition tends to the needs of its individual members and not those of the profession as a whole, which are two different things.

Looking at this another way, while the GCSAA has been consistently effective tending to its members throughout the years, it has yet to accept the responsibility to shape the profession, itself. This is understandable because the GCSAA's charter purpose didn't include this responsibility. However, because the need for the profession's effectiveness has grown throughout the years, we're now at the point where there's no one else to pass the baton to except the GCSAA. Accordingly, because their profession virtually has gone unattended, the indignities suffered by superintendents to date will only continue to escalate further until the GCSAA realizes the welfare of its members is forever entwined with the respect, or lack thereof, accorded their profession.

Second, as a result of the intense political infighting that occurred within the GCSAA during the early 1980s, a political message was delivered to future generations of GCSAA members that basically stated the governing rules of the association had been set for the foreseeable future and they weren't to be messed with. To assure there would be little messing around, the GCSAA bylaws were arbitrarily amended at the time to require a stifling mandatory two-thirds vote of members to amend any bylaw provision. (See my November 2005 GCN column.)

A direct by-product of these maneuverings is that subsequent GCSAA boards have been hesitant to pursue meaningful policy change because the combination of the inevitable politics that attaches to every policy-change issue, together with the need to achieve a difficult-to-obtain two-thirds approval vote of the membership consistently has offered little hope for success. As a result: Natural leadership types within the membership avoid board

of director service because they realize there will be little opportunity to make a difference; archaic election procedures continue; board performance becomes less transparent; and members have yet been given their first opportunity to vote on a 25-year-old volatile relocation issue.

Is it any wonder why the indignities that have been fostered on superintendents for decades go unchallenged and will continue to go unchallenged until enough members get upset enough to forge change. This goal will be realized only through a concerted chapter level campaign.

Recommended change

To bring life and respect to the golf course superintendent profession:

1. The GCSAA must pursue the one proven way to develop respect for a profession – through education. One of the most consistent problems superintendents have always had is that the vast majority of their employers don't have a basic understanding of how and why they do their jobs. Through history, effective teachers at every level always have been universally respected. So, too, will the golf course superintendent profession be respected – putting an end to all the present day indignities – once it establishes itself as a worthy and dedicated teacher of the brethren. (See my July 2006 GCN column for a profile of recommended educational programming.)

2. The GCSAA must upgrade its election procedures to insure that more of its better-qualified members see the call to duty and become more willing to pursue committee and Board service throughout the Association. (More on this in a future column.)

3. GCSAA members must marshal their forces to eliminate the mandatory two-thirds approval vote needed to amend the association's bylaws. Until this happens, the GCSAA, its members and the profession will be locked in a 1980s time frame forever.

The ball is now on the GCSAA membership's side of the court. Until members realize an indignity fostered on one superintendent is an indignity fostered on all superintendents, they'll remain outside of golf's inner family looking in. GCN

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at www.golfcoursenews.com/messageboard.



Please listen carefully

Here's an imaginary, but probably not unrealistic, conversation between a golf course superintendent and one of his employees:

Employee: "I'm really upset! Mr. Jones from the green committee scolded me about that problem spot on the eighth green right in front of several members."

Superintendent: "You shouldn't be upset. He's on the green committee, and he's concerned about a legitimate problem."

Now answer three questions about this conversation: What's the employee concerned about? What did the superintendent hear? Did the superintendent really listen?

What's the problem? The superintendent (a) didn't hear the employee's real concern, and (b) he interjected his opinion when the employee had begun to discuss what had happened. The employee is left feeling the superintendent isn't concerned about his opinions or feelings. Unfortunately, the result is the employee is likely to become less open, more uncertain and less motivated.

Let's look at a more productive response:

Employee: "I'm really upset. Mr. Jones from the green committee scolded me about that problem spot on the eighth green right in front of several members."

Superintendent: "It sounds like you're angry with Mr. Jones for making you look bad in front of members."

Employee: "Yes, because he's on the committee, he knows how hard we've worked on that green."

Superintendent: "What do you suggest we do?"

Employee: "Pay more attention to the eighth green and fix the problem."

In this version, the superintendent didn't seem to talk much. The role was listening to the employee talk through his concerns and feelings. By listening and facilitating, the superintendent enabled the employee to validate a concern about Mr. Jones' comments, work through his anger and propose a solution. In this version, the employee concludes there was a good discussion and feels the incident is closed, maintaining or increasing his motivation.

This example highlights two key points about listening: One, listen carefully to

understand exactly what's being said, and two, active or empathic listening enhances communication.

Many people don't fully listen to what's being said or ask follow-up questions to elicit greater understanding or additional information. More often than not, when someone initiates a conversation, he has spent time thinking about the idea, the issue, the concern or the situation. Interjecting off-the-cuff ideas and responses before someone completely explains their thinking loses the fruits of the time spent with that individual and diminishes the quality of the interpersonal relationship.

In the first example conversation, the superintendent didn't hear what the employee was communicating, and the premature response brought the conversation to an unsuccessful end. In the second version, the superintendent heard the employee was talking about his feelings from the incident with Mr. Jones, not about the problem on the eighth green, and continued the conversation with a satisfactory resolution.

No interruptions please

Even worse than not completely listening, people often interrupt others because they think they already know what's being said. Sometimes people hear what they want to hear, not what's being said. In the following dialogue, a superintendent has just told her staff that an employee has been injured and the maintenance staff must work extra hours. Bob, the employee she expects to resist the most, approaches her after the meeting:

Bob: "I'm concerned about the extra work because I'm taking a course and have some other plans but ..."

Superintendent (interrupting): "I knew you would be a problem. We all have to do our share. We have no choice."

Bob: "Please, let me finish! What I'm trying to say is that I want to do my part. I'm even willing to do more than my share. However, it's important to me that my time is scheduled so I can finish my class and attend my sister's wedding."

Superintendent: "Oh! That's great. We can arrange that."

In the end, the outcome of this conversation was positive even though it was awkward. The superintendent made an

incorrect assumption about what Bob wanted to say. Think what might have happened had Bob not persisted.

When supervising others, the consequences of failing to allow an employee to fully express ideas, opinions and feelings and/or to not listen completely are often two-fold. First, the conversation isn't brought to a successful conclusion. Second, you've communicated the message you don't want to listen, and even more significant is future ideas, concerns and feelings might never be communicated.

Active or empathic listening enhances communication. Our tendency is to view listening as a passive activity. A more active approach to listening can be a proactive way to enhance communication with employees. The listener takes active responsibility for understanding the content and feelings behind what's being said. The listener's underlying theme is to use active listening to help others solve their problems.

What's your response?

Let's look at another example. An employee approaches you and says: "The deadline to finish fertilizing the fairways isn't realistic." The typical response would be to insist the deadline is realistic. An active listening response, however, would be: "It sounds like you're concerned about meeting the deadline." The advantage of this response is two-fold. First, you show understanding for the employee's position. Second, you and the employee can talk about the employee's feelings and meeting the deadline. The active learning approach opens the door for communication rather than contributing to a budding confrontation.

An open communication climate is created through active listening. The listener better understands what a person means and how the person feels about situations and problems. Active listening is a skill that communicates acceptance and increases interpersonal trust between employees and their supervisors. The chance of an employee leaving a conversation perceiving he has been treated fairly is heightened by the use of active listening.

My challenge to you is establish a realistic goal for the percentage of the time you'll listen with nothing else in mind. GCN



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Here's Johnny... and John

THEY'RE NOT SUCH AN ODD COUPLE AFTER ALL

by
PAT
JONES

GCN
INTERVIEWS TV
COMMENTATOR
JOHNNY
MILLER AND
ARCHITECT JOHN
HARBOTTLE.

In the back of my mind, I knew John Harbottle and Johnny Miller were probably aware that I'd been occasionally... perhaps ... kind of ... just a wee bit critical of Mr. Miller and his comments about "grain" on putting surfaces and other maintenance matters during his golf broadcasts on NBC.

When they agreed to conduct a joint interview with GCN about Timilick Tahoe, their newest collaboration, which is in California, I wondered if that might be uncomfortable and how they'd handle it. Also, I thought a limited design partnership between a serious architect and a TV commentator might be ... well, kind of an odd-couple thing. You know ... the "celebrity" designer who "partners" with a legitimate craftsman in name only. Well, I was wrong on both counts.

Johnny Miller is, quite simply, a golf legend. A junior golf prodigy and Brigham Young University graduate, Miller broke into the big time with a surprise second-place finish at the Masters in 1971 at the ripe age of 23. Two years later, he captured his first major with a win at the 1973 U.S. Open. He sizzled in 1974 and 1975, winning an amazing 12 events. He went on to take his second major championship at the British Open in 1976. Eventually, he retired from the regular Tour with 24 victories, his last coming at the 1994 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

Now 59, Miller is collecting Emmy Award nominations (he has two) instead of tournament trophies. He is the voice of NBC golf and arguably the most candid commentator sitting in any television tower today ("Lousy shot, huh, Roger?"). When he's not announcing, or skiing or fishing, he designs golf courses. He's credited with a few beauties, including Thanksgiving Point in Lehi, Utah; Entrada at Snow Canyon in St. George, Utah; and my personal favorite

Badlands Golf Club in Las Vegas. Oh yeah, he's in the World Golf Hall of Fame, too.

Harbottle isn't necessarily one of the best-known architects in the country, but some think he's one of the best in the West. A Pete Dye protégé whose parents were outstanding amateur players (they're both inductees into the Pacific Northwest Golf Association's Hall of Fame), the 46-year-old is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architect's board of governors and has worn the society's Don Ross plaid for more than 15 years.

In his career, Harbottle has designed 17 new facilities, including the highly rated Olympic Course at Gold Mountain in Bremerton, Wash., but also has received plaudits for his redesign work at Los Angeles County Club's North Course and other classics. He's no stranger to partnering with Tour players, having collaborated with players/comedians Fuzzy Zoeller and Peter Jacobsen.

Does that last point suggest it takes a sense of humor to work with sometimes irascible Johnny Miller? Let's find out.

Q How did you two hook up?

JH: We first hooked up on a resort course that's now called Genoa Lakes in Nevada. The owner was the guy who founded Tombstone Pizza. Johnny was brought into the project along the way, and I loved working with him. He's personable and low-key. When the owners of Timilick came to me and asked about bringing in a high-profile player, I recommended Johnny immediately.

JM: Working with John has been a really nice thing, and we'll do more courses in the future. He doesn't need me, but when the developer is selling homes, it helps to have a name attached. I could just do that and show up once, but that's not my style.

Q That's a pretty honest approach. Johnny, what do you bring to the process?

Two heads are better than one as long as the egos don't get in the way. It makes for a good product. I've been doing this since the early '70s. I've learned from so many people. I've worked with maybe a dozen different architects. Collaboration is a way for me to learn the craft a bit better.

My expertise is visual. That's why I'm a good announcer. I'm the ultimate nitpicker. I have a good eye for what makes sense. He's got the eye of the tiger. Best of all, we never B.S. each other.

Q OK John, what's Mr. Miller really like?

He's exactly what you'd think from watching him on TV. He's completely honest and totally passionate. And he doesn't give himself enough credit for what he knows about architecture.

Q Johnny, your turn. Tell us about Mr. Harbottle.

He's so dedicated to his work. I have complete confidence in him. I've worked with some designers in the past and always had to look over my shoulder. I worried about things such as bunker placement, wind, etc. — the 90 million little technical details that make a great course. I'd think, 'He's not that great a player and doesn't get it.' It's never been like that with John.

Q Johnny, how much time do you spend on a site?

I try to get there when they need me. I'll probably go more than required. I enjoy going to Truckee, Calif., near the Timilick project. They have great fishing flies at the local hardware store. The area is pristine and so beautiful. Other developers and course



Photo courtesy of Timillick Tahoe

designers in the area have done a great job. I'm hoping the market stays strong. Not that I'm going to make any more money on the project, but we just want it to be a success.

Q What do you disagree about?

JH: We don't disagree a lot. But I remember at Genoa (Nev.) Lakes Golf Club, Johnny wanted to add a (longer) back tee on the 18th. He just mentioned the idea to someone, and it later got back to me he had the impression I wasn't listening. We went back and added it, but now we spend a lot of time talking about every aspect so we resolve stuff like that in advance.

JM: It's funny because I came in halfway through that project. It's like going to the hospital where John and his wife just had a baby, and I come waltzing in and criticize how the baby looks. He could have said, 'Hey, it's my baby' and tell me where to go. But, after a day or two, he listened, and we found a solution. I won't force him to make a change, but I also won't ask for something flippantly.

Some of the best designs in the country come out of collaborations. What I always say about ideas is that, if you're open to them, you'll learn stuff you never would have. In the process, you go into a whole new 'room' of knowledge. You can learn much more.

Q How would you describe the design at Timillick?

JM: It's a mountain course, but it doesn't have the supersevere contours of most mountain courses. The back nine has great terrain – large rock outcroppings and pretty spectacular stuff. There's a rippling water feature through holes 17 and 18. We aren't trying to build the next U.S. Open site, so it's a little longer than 7,000 from the tips. It's got a great feel about it – a great spirit about it. It's a nice mix of different design features. It'll be in the 'pretty hard' category.

JH: We have a common design philosophy that combines risk/reward with dramatic bunkering. That allows you to challenge a good player, but not kill the average one. Timillick is going to be a great example of that.

Q What newer courses have you visited recently that you admire?

JH: I don't visit new courses too much. I don't want to be influenced. Give me the old stuff. I played Royal County Down in Ireland (during the 2006 Ryder Cup), and it might be the best course in the world.

JM: John's right. The really phenomenal courses are there already. Pebble Beach is probably the only true 10 on the scale when you combine beauty and great golf. I agree County Down is right there, too. That said, I love Bandon Dunes. Timillick is pretty close to a nine on the scale. There's nothing that replaces a good piece of land. No matter what you do, there's nothing that can equal a great site. You're excited because you know you can't screw it up.

Q John, do you sometimes get "pooh-pooed" by others because you're now working with a "celebrity" design partner?

When I first got out on my own, I wanted



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to show what I could do, but the owner brought in a 'celebrity.' I didn't want to share the limelight and resented it. As I've gotten older, I feel I've made my name. My feathers are much less ruffled by the idea. Particularly when it's someone like Johnny who's a good person and contributes to the project.

It's just business. Sometimes the developer gets nervous partway through a project and wants the celebrity. The bank might even make financing for the project contingent on it. We're all affected by brands and 'signature' status. It doesn't mean you can't do a great job, but when you're investing millions, you can't ignore the appeal of the 'name' a celebrity brings to the table.

Q John, you've helped design 17 courses and worked with many superintendents. What separates the good from the great?

That's an easy question. Owners will ask you what to look for in a superintendent, and I tell them to ask their job candidates,

'If you come across a problem, where do you turn?' The best one's will say they never stop asking questions and learning. Those that just want to sit around and do what they've always done won't make it. Plus, I always respect guys who spend a lot of time on the course. A good friend of mine, a great superintendent, walks his course every morning.

Q Will this be an ongoing partnership?

JH: We don't have a company, per se, and I'll keep doing my own stuff. But, he'd still be the first guy I'd recommend. Johnny gets it.

Q Johnny, many folks criticize you for talking about 'grain' or other maintenance issues. How do you respond?

Hey, the truth will set you free. I never, ever have a problem with talking about grain on a Bermudagrass green that tilts to the west or the southwest. I do my homework. I'm

not just some flippin' guy on the air who has no clue about how grass grows.

Q You're kind of walking into the lion's den by agreeing to speak at the Golf Industry Show next year. Are you ready for it?

I hope they give me some trouble. I'm looking forward to it. The improvement in course maintenance in my lifetime is just incredible. It's an art form. When I came on tour, the only course that was in really good shape was Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio. I don't think these young guys on the Tour today have any idea of how great the conditions are now.

Q Will you say that on the air?

Yup. There aren't too many guys who come close to me in the department of shooting from the hip. GCN

John Harbottle can be reached at harbottlede sign@mindspring.com. Johnny Miller can be reached at info@johnnymillerdesign.com.

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The North Course at The Club at Bond Head is a parklands-style course that is more hilly than the links-style South Course. Photo: Chris Gallo

by JOHN WALSH

Giampaolo Investments – a Canadian real-estate company based in Brampton, Ontario, that owns a mix of industrial, commercial and residential developments – wanted to diversify its portfolio even more. That led the company to develop its first golf course – The Club at Bond Head, an upscale, 36-hole, daily-fee golf facility in Ontario.

But building the golf course was anything but easy. Water and land restrictions made it difficult.

The facility consists of two championship-length golf courses that sit on about 500 acres of land. While the topography of the land was conducive to providing high-quality golf holes, very limited water resources were available for irrigation, especially during grow-in. The site features rolling farmland, forested hills and creek bottomlands.

Mark Hansen, director of real-estate for Giampaolo Investments, says the land on which Bond Head was built is near the Oak Ridges Moraine, a government-protected area that sits on the largest underground aquifer in Canada. The government planned to restrict development in the area further, but before the proposed restrictions took effect, Giampaolo purchased 1,000 acres of land.

“The lay of the land lent itself to a being a links-style course,” Hansen says. “The biggest thing I wanted was an architect to see and utilize what was there and not move a lot of dirt. I personally interviewed and hired (golf course architect) Jason Straka (of Hurdzan/Fry Design Golf Course Design). Mike Hurdzan flew up here for the meeting. Everybody else sent their minions. That’s what did it for me. He took the time to come here himself. At the same time, we were interviewing him, he was interviewing us. That’s what you want in a good architect. They were a top-notch firm from day one. They’re world-class.”

“We had areas where we battled, but we found good working ground,” he adds. “I want to save money, and architects want to spend it.”

Hansen says if he was going to build 36 holes, he wanted two different golf courses. Giampaolo did. One is a links-style course (South Course), and the other is a parklands-style course (North Course).

The soil condition of the land, however, was erratic. Some areas of the site consisted of heavy topsoil and clay, and others were deep glacial deposits of sand and gravel, which meant different areas had various capacities to retain moisture.

A perennially flowing stream named Penville Creek bisects the site, but drawing water out of the creek as needed wasn’t permitted. There also are two intermittent streams that feed Penville Creek that were impounded for cattle ponds as part of the sites previous farming use. Additionally, two on-site wells pumped at a rate of 50 gallons per minute (300 gpm is needed for most golf course irrigation systems), but only one of the wells was permitted for use. No municipal water, including potable and effluent, was available for use.

Based on these restrictions, the design

team identified five solutions to deal with the water limitations.

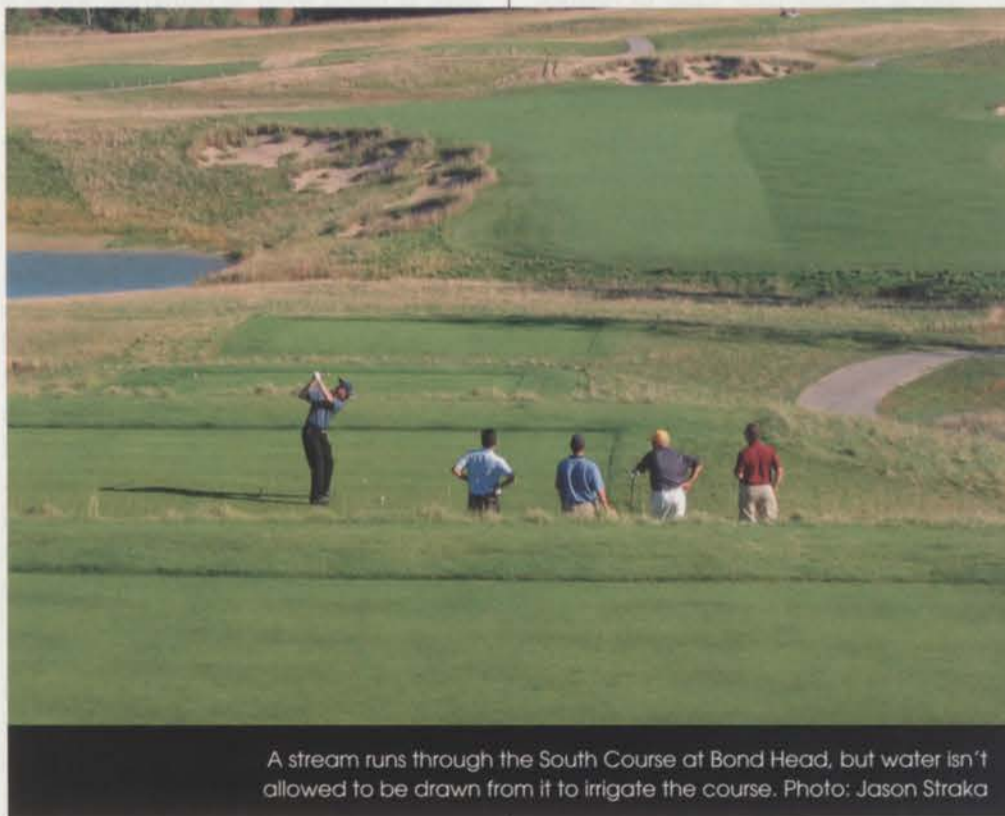
Drought-tolerant grass

First, the team identified the most drought-tolerant turfgrass species and drought-resistant greens construction method, which included designing the South Course to be an all fescue (a blend of Chewings, sheep and creeping red, with hard fescue in the secondary rough) golf course, except the California greens, which are A-4 bentgrass.

“The different soil types will tend to support one variety a bit better than the others because of their moisture-holding capability,” Straka says. “In this manner, the water requirements throughout much of the golf course would be similar.”

“Additionally, we chose a sand that passed greens construction specifications on the finer particle size range,” he adds. “This allowed for slower water movement throughout the profile and greater capillary action.”

The greens on the North Course were



A stream runs through the South Course at Bond Head, but water isn’t allowed to be drawn from it to irrigate the course. Photo: Jason Straka



A drought-tolerant fescue blend was used for the tees, fairways and rough on the South Course. Photo: Jason Straka

constructed and grassed using the same specs as the greens on the South Course, but the rest of the North Course was planted in a more traditional North American style of bentgrass fairways and tees and bluegrass/fescue rough.

Ian McQueen, the golf course superintendent who oversees both courses, was the assistant at Magna Golf Club in Aurora, Ontario, before coming to Bond Head. McQueen was interested in being part of a grow-in, becoming a head superintendent

and maintaining an all-fescue golf course, which hadn't been done on a public golf course in Ontario.

McQueen says there's always been a concern about water, but there's always been enough to capture in the spring. It's just a matter managing it throughout the year.

"With fescue, the perception is it doesn't need as much water as bentgrass, which is true," he says. "But it needs just as much water as bentgrass when you're establishing it. I never grew in fescue before, and it is much slower than growing in bentgrass. There also are more washouts with fescue. It was challenging."

Holding ponds

Second, the small well was coupled with one of the cattle ponds that was enlarged significantly. The pond could receive all the water the well could give and capture the intermittent drainage feeding it. The pond became the central irrigation reservoir. A second cattle pond also was enlarged and serves as an emergency water source that could be transferred to the main irrigation pond if needed.

But when determining a water budget, the existing cattle ponds and 50-gpm well still couldn't provide enough water. So, the two cattle ponds were enlarged as much as possible. Each of the ponds was tripled in size and captures and holds significantly more water from the intermittent drainage patterns than before.

"We needed space to capture water in

spring and hold it there," Straka says. "I've not experienced anything like this to this degree. It was tough."

Still, McQueen says the 45-million-gallon holding pond will be widened so it can hold 55 million gallons of water.

"We don't take water out of the ground," he says. "We store spring water to use throughout the whole year."

Capture and recycle

Third, a drainage system feeds the ponds as much as possible to recycle and capture excess surface water. The Club at Bond Head has several hundred catch basins that capture surface water and conveys it to outlet points via miles of subsurface pipe that leads to the two enlarged ponds. Much of the golf course surface water is harvested and captured in these two ponds.

Limit waste

Fourth, to further limit the amount of irrigation water needed, an extensive irrigation system was designed and installed to micro-manage areas of the golf course and limit waste. For starters, the dual-head system installed can water the greens and surrounds separately. This avoids overwatering one area just to meet minimum requirements in another.

A large number of perimeter heads also were installed to avoid watering secondary or no-maintenance rough areas.

"This helps playability by keeping these areas thin, but it also helps avoid overwatering fringe areas to meet minimum watering needs while other areas are getting too much water," Straka says. "This extra number of heads also allowed the design to better overcome the effects of wind on the hilly site (North Course), minimizing the effects of overwatering and evaporation. While this might seem ironic, by strategically placing a greater number of irrigation heads, this design allows the golf course to use less water."

The irrigation system cost considerably more than \$1 million, Straka says.

Siphon system

Lastly, a siphon system was designed to capture water from Penville Creek during spring freshet (when snowmelt and spring rainwater overfills the creek), hold it in a large off-site pond and transfer it to the main irrigation reservoir as needed.

A strategic area off-site was located in which a multiple weir system would back up water during spring freshet. The weir system backs up water into a series of pipes that gravity feeds into an adjacent small

AT A GLANCE

The Club at Bond Head

Location: Bond Head, Ontario

Holes: 36

Acres: 260 for South Course, 210 for North Course

Length: 7,477 (South Course); 7,085 (North Course)

Architect: Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design (Jason Straka)

Golf course superintendent: Ian McQueen

Owner: Giampaolo Investments

Builders: ASL Golf Construction (South Course) NMP Golf Construction (North Course)

Construction cost (for both courses): About \$10 million

Entire project cost (including land and clubhouse):

About \$40 million.

Web site: www.theclubatbondhead.com

pond, which then has a transfer pump into a much larger pond nearby. Water is taken only during times of flooding when it's readily available and not needed by the creek system.

The large siphon pond holds the major-

ing through environmental regulations is a necessary evil."

McQueen started on the project in April 2003, when the builder, ASL Golf Course Construction, started moving earth on the South Course. During construction,

"While this might seem ironic, by strategically placing a greater number of irrigation heads, this design allows the golf course to use less water." – JASON STRAKA

ity of the irrigation water for the entire year, though it is only captured during a two-week time frame. The water is piped to the main irrigation pond on the golf course for use and to keep the pond full for aesthetic purposes in times of heavy irrigation needs.

McQueen says he's restricted to use no more than 900,000 gallons of water a day for both courses. He says the fescue course requires less water, about one-third of what the bentgrass course uses. This year, McQueen will use about 50 million gallons of water for both courses. Next year, the goal is 42 million because neither course will be in grow-in mode.

Land ho!

Building the course wasn't any easier than dealing with the water restrictions, Straka says. For starters, the property was sectioned off in two different zoning patterns because it was in two municipalities. And, because of that, the permitting process was doubled, and the development time was lengthened by a year. Because the property was near a big glacial area that supplies drinking water, it received much scrutiny. The land was zoned for agriculture, so before the development team could progress, the government had to make sure the land wasn't best used for farming.

MDS arcs also caused problems. The designated arcs extended from a neighboring property onto the golf course, and anything in the arcs couldn't be developed. The arcs were there because farmers on the neighboring property didn't want to cause potential problems with the smells emanating from the farm. So developers had to work around areas. Eventually, Giampaolo purchased the neighboring farm and shut it down just so it could develop its own property, Straka says.

"I had a good handle on the development restrictions going into the project, but I hired a good team of consultants to get me through it," Hansen says. "Work-

383,000 cubic yards of dirt were moved for the North Course by NMP Golf Construction, and 164,000 cubic yards of dirt were moved for the South Course.

Grow-in of the South Course started in the fall of 2003 and finished in fall of 2004. Grow-in of the North Course started in summer of 2005 and finished July 1, 2006.

"Keep in mind we have a six-month growing season," McQueen says.

Hansen says he didn't focus on the building contractors because he let McQueen deal mostly with that. McQueen says he had a good relationship with builders of both courses. Some of McQueen's input included making sure the bunkers were maintainable after they were built, moving some of the bunkers away from greens to allow more room for a mechanical bunker rake to maneuver around the bunkers, and make sure the

bunkers weren't too steep.

"Most of my recommendations were acceptable," he says. "There was give and take. I was always thinking about how the course would be maintained. I made sure grades were faster in some areas and slower in others. We have to maintain this course for the average public player."

As McQueen looks back at the construction process, he says he wishes the fairways would have been sand-capped because of the wet soil.

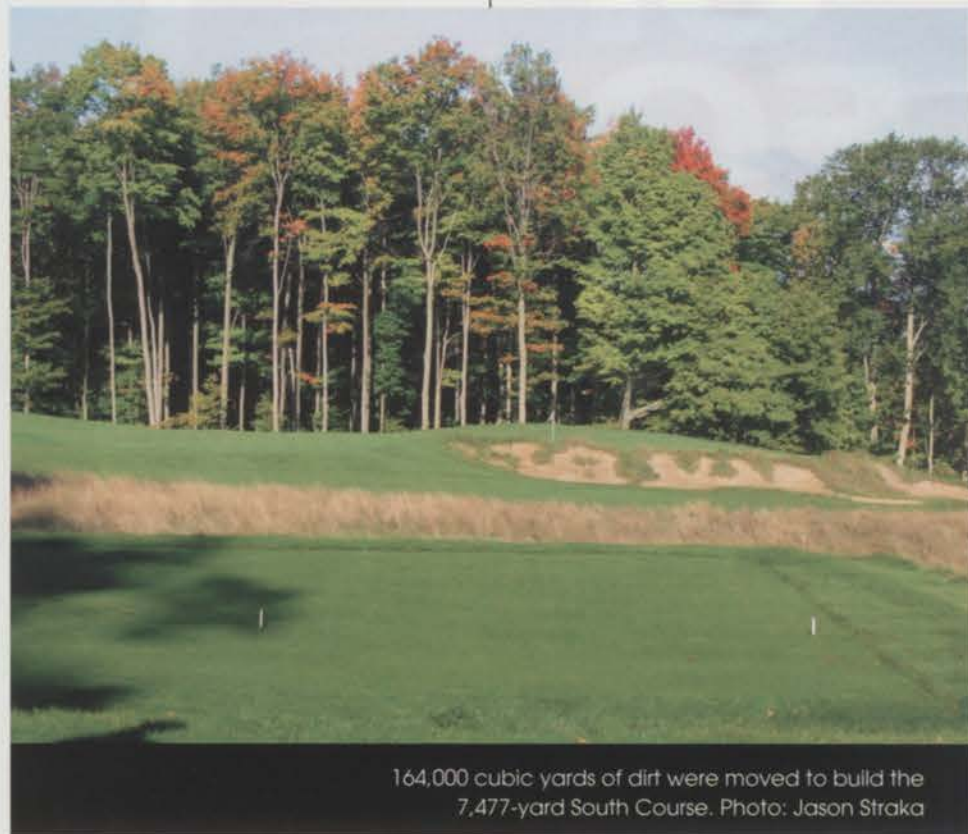
"Overall, the project turned out great," he says.

Tweaks here and there

Being the first full year of operation with both courses open, McQueen says he changed some fairway lines to give the mowers more room to turn and is concentrating on wear areas. He also checks the sand level in the bunkers and was constantly overseeding and topdressing.

In retrospect, Hansen says the golf course was the easiest part of the development and the clubhouse was the biggest challenge of the whole development because he tried to come up with a theme for two different golf courses and it was difficult trying to accommodate everything.

"I'm just so proud of the whole development and the team we put together," Hansen says. "The course will be recognized as one of the best in the county over time." GCN



164,000 cubic yards of dirt were moved to build the 7,477-yard South Course. Photo: Jason Straka



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In addition to being co-owner of a golf car distributor company, a 36-hole golf facility and a golf real estate development company, Walt Lankau and four partners used to own Sterling National Country Club in Massachusetts.

But something had to go, partly because Lankau was trying to simplify his life.

"I'm not in the investment mode right now," says the 64-year-old.

So Lankau and his partners decided Sterling National – a private course designed by Michael Hurdzan that opened in 1991 – was what had to go. The group came to a consensus, and about nine months later,

sold it to Forewinds Hospitality for an undisclosed price. Lankau and his partners listed the facility with a golf course broker, which brought in potential buyers.

"One of the groups (Forewinds) decided they liked it, and they made us an offer, and we worked it out," Lankau says. "We received an acceptable deal, obviously, because we went through with it."

In many ways, selling a golf course is similar to selling a home. It needs to have curb appeal and be well maintained, and proper record-keeping must be in order. It also helps to have a professional broker help manage the sale.

by T.R. MASSEY



**UP
FOR
SALE**

**IN A BUYER'S MARKET, OWNERS NEED TO
MAKE SURE FINANCES ARE IN ORDER
AND PROPERTIES ARE WELL MAINTAINED**

Market conditions

In the current golf market, selling a property isn't as easy as it was 10 years ago, when the industry was experiencing exceptional growth. The National Golf Foundation's research indicates there are more than 16,000 courses in America, but no one knows how many of them are for sale. However, brokers claim the old saying, "Every golf course is for sale for the right price," is true now more than ever.

Steve Hughes, a licensed broker with Kansas City, Mo.-based Hughes and Co., conducts golf course appraisals and says the market is a buyer's one.

"There are a lot of golf courses on the market," he says. "Nobody knows how many, but certainly hundreds and perhaps thousands. Most likely it's hundreds. But 10 years ago, you could hardly find a course for sale."

Hughes is aware of 12 courses for sale in Missouri, which is 4 percent of the state's 292 facilities. Although Hughes says there isn't a way to determine how many courses are for sale nationwide, he estimates 8,000 are potentially for sale at any one time. Of those, only 7 percent are on the national market, however. The rest appeal to local buyers or developers.

Hilda Allen's Hilda Allen Realty, which specializes in selling golf courses, has closed 214 deals totaling more than \$750 million since 1991.

"There is a tremendous amount of courses for sale, probably more than in the hundreds," Allen says. "The major corporate level is more than 100. ClubCorp has its whole portfolio on the market, except Pinehurst. I just sold three during the past year for Meadowbrook Golf."

At press time, ClubCorp had a deal pending to sell its inventory of golf courses to KSL Capital Partners for a reported \$1.8 billion.

According to NGF, 124.5 new 18-hole courses were built in the United States in 2005, which is a decline from the high-water mark of 398.5 built in 2000. In fact, the number is reflective of the amount of activity in the mid-1980s, a low mark during the past few decades and the beginning of the latest golf course development boom. Also, 93.5 18-hole facilities closed in 2005,

according to NGF. Of those, 54 percent were for real estate development.

"So many owners are forced to sell because we've overbuilt and golf participation is steady to declining during the past three or four years," Hughes says. "Many courses aren't making their debt payment to the bank to stay open. Many buyers are real estate developers who want to enter the commercial market."

NGF numbers indicate 61 percent of the new golf courses built in 2005 were tied to real estate development, an increase from 35 to 40 percent in the peak years during the late 1990s.

"Many of them are happy to hang on to it and try to make it go for five years," Hughes says. "But their safety net is that they have this land that's worth so much per acre."

Hughes says potential buyers of golf courses realize the land on which the courses sit is worth as much as the course itself, so more potential buyers are developer types because they want to develop now or in the future after they evaluate the market.

"We have a stable of buyers looking for courses, and about a third of them are golf pros who want their own course," Hughes says. "One third are developers looking to buy ground that just happens to be a golf course, and the other third are corporate golf-type entities."

Larry Hirsch of Golf Property Analysts in Harrisburg, Pa., believes there are enough properties on the market to keep prices somewhat depressed. But he doesn't see many courses being bought for purposes other than golf.

"A lot of ours that are for sale will stay golf courses," Hirsch says. "Right now, developers aren't as aggressive as they've been because the housing market is slowing."

Yet, Allen doesn't believe the housing bubble is bursting, especially in the South and Sun Belt. She cites interest rates that, in October, were at a six-month low.

"You can't just arbitrarily rezone," she says. "There were a little more than 100 courses throughout the country that were redeveloped. Out of the total, that's not too much."

Get it ready

With the market conditions what they are, let's imagine you're the owner of a course



Broker Steve Hughes is aware of 12 golf courses for sale in Missouri. Photo: Hughes & Co.

who wants to sell, regardless of the current business climate. How can you get the best price for the facility in a market that favors buyers? Before anything else, check your records.

"First of all, I would have good, easy-to-read financial statements," Hirsch says. "It's a cash business, and as such, many courses' financial statements don't accurately reflect the business they're doing. I'd suggest cleaning that up for a year or two, so your statements reflect your operation. No one will buy a golf course based on what you say it makes unless you back it up with financials."

It's paramount to have all paperwork in order, Allen says.

"You need complete disclosure of income and expenses for the last three to five years and what you spent on capital improvement," she says. "And you need patience."

Hughes advises tracking revenue.

"If you put money in your pocket, it's tough to sell," he says.

Owners also need an updated golf course survey, an environmental report, a list of all equipment and a title for the real estate, Hughes says.

"Sometimes, owners get their surveys and environmental reports and get rude awakenings when a tee box is on someone else's ground or a fuel storage tank has been leaking," he says.

Keeping up with repairs is important, too, Allen says.

"Do all the repairs that need to be done on buildings," she says. "Make it look like you're in business. You have to operate until you sell it. Don't stop spending money on



Allen

it and expect to get top dollar.”

Hughes agrees.

“It needs to be in good shape – you can’t let the course get ratty, with weeds and bare spots,” he says. “It’s like a house. You want it to look good.”

When Lankau and his partners had Sterling National on the market, he says they kept the course well maintained.

“We never, ever said, ‘We’re selling, let’s start to skimp.’ That’s not the way we operate,” Lankau says. “You end up paying in the long run because buyers these days are sophisticated and they will negotiate it in the end if you let it run down.”

Hirsch says keeping a course well maintained is important, but one also must consider the nature of a golf course and its location.

“You have to understand the market that’s going to be attracted to the property,” he says. “Some courses, because of their location, gross revenue or quality, are attractive, or not, to certain segments of the market. Some buyers say, ‘I only want to be in a major market with half a million and gross revenue of a minimum of \$2 million,’ so you eliminate certain courses. Those that don’t meet that standard are more likely to be bought by local buyers, not national ones.”

Hirsch, who conducts between 50 and 100 appraisals annually, says they’re an integral part of the selling process.

“You approach it like any other appraisal assignment – you identify the appraisal problem and learn about the property,” he says. “The difference between golf courses and other properties is golf courses aren’t just real estate, they’re a business. If you don’t understand that, you’ll have issues.”

Other factors, such as management issues,



Larry Hirsch of Golf Property Analysts believes there are enough properties on the market to keep prices somewhat depressed. Photo: Golf Property Analysts

weather and type of course affect the process, too, Hirsch says. That’s why he says it’s important to pick the right appraiser when selling a golf course.

“It takes a real understanding of what it is you’re appraising,” he says. “That’s where I see big problems – guys who don’t understand golf courses or guys who play golf but don’t understand what they’re appraising. They don’t even understand what it’s like to be a consumer. You have to have someone who understands golf.”

Better business

In the end, though, it might not be enough to have good record-keeping and a well-maintained facility. To feed the bottom line, you might have to go the extra mile.

“In most cases, sellers aren’t getting what they’re asking for,” Allen says.

She says the industry as a whole, and owners specifically, need to boost business by increasing the number of golfers and rounds at their facilities.

“In the South, we’re up – it’s been a little healthier for the past 18 months,” she says. “No hurricanes helps. It appears we’ve had a great season in the Southeast, and the Mid-Atlantic is up a little bit.

Because the market is overbuilt, the industry has to let the absorption of less competitive golf courses continue to return to a productive market, Allen says.

“We’re at a saturation point,” she says. “We have to get mom and the kids out there with dad. Baby Boomers need to be playing more than twice a year.”

Allen says she’s worked with owners recently who really understand how to sell the sport.

“We all can’t be Michelle Wie and Tiger Woods,” she says. “We need to make it fun and affordable. We need something else to do while we’re there besides play golf – fitness centers, day-care, walking trails and restaurants are needed. We need a good family atmosphere. If it’s only for daddy, it’s not going to work. We need to make it a family affair.” GCN

T.R. Massey is a freelance writer based in Columbus, Ohio. He can be reached at trm@columbus.rr.com.

SELLER’S CHECKLIST

Make sure your business is in order before putting your golf course on the market. Here’s a list of items to have updated and handy:

- Historical rounds, paying and nonpaying/member (four to five years)
- Historical green fees, tracking increases and decreases
- Current membership roster/annualized monthly dues billing
- Allocation of ownership payroll
- Allocation of pro shop income and expenses
- Number of members (annually, for four years), including those who left and joined each year
- Current deferred maintenance, if any

- Equipment list (course and clubhouse)
- Title report (legal, easements, title, taxes, etc.)
- Land survey (ALTA)
- Floor plans and golf course plans
- Club documents, articles of incorporation, bylaws
- Copies of leases (equipment, carts)
- Other agreements, licenses, permits
- Any homes association documents/restrictions on redevelopment
- USGA Green Section reports (agronomic audit)
- Environmental Phase 1 audit

Source: Hughes & Co.

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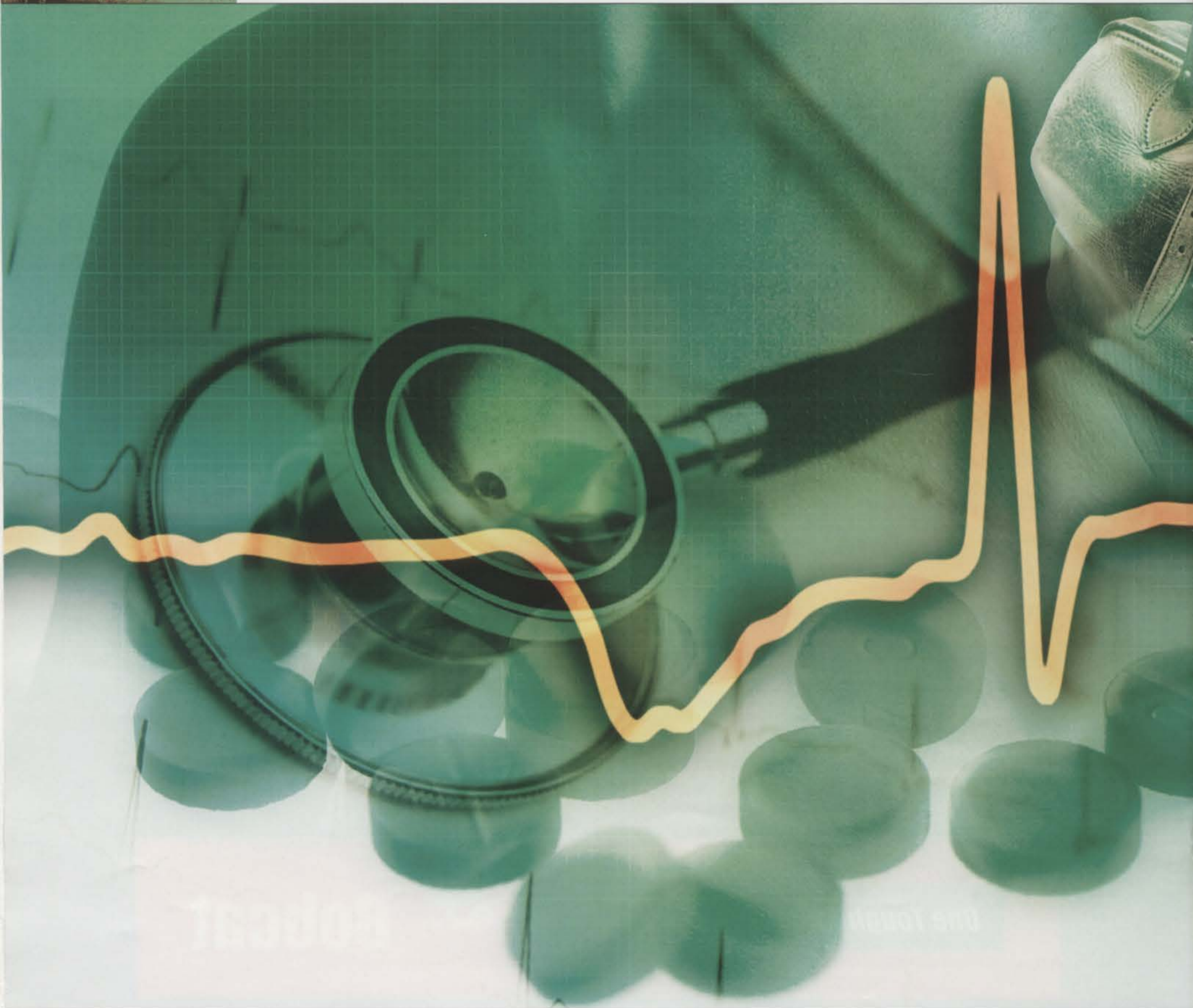
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"One of the concerns is that golf companies and clubs can't raise their green fees fast enough to keep pace with the increases in fixed expenses, such as health-care insurance." — GARY

by JOHN
TORSIELLO

Health care and its rising costs are hot topics that likely will remain so as the nation continues to grapple with the issue.

The golf course industry is like any other, with management concerned about how to provide health insurance for its employees — many of whom are particularly vulnerable because of the sometimes seasonal nature of their jobs — and workers struggling to provide adequate coverage for themselves and their families.

"It's probably the No. 1 most sought after benefit of employment our members are looking for," says Scott Woodhead, senior manager of government and membership standards for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, about health insurance. "The reason is that it's not offered more than it is offered. But people can hardly live without it."

The GCSAA serves as a facilitator to assist its members to find affordable health-care coverage, Woodhead says.

Jay Karen, director of membership for the Charleston, S.C.-based National Golf Course Owners Association, says the NGCOA's program administrator receives inquiries from its members every week about health care. The NGCOA offers group insurance as part of its membership benefits package.

"Many will take a quote from our program and sign up, or they might take that quote and use it as a negotiating tool with their current agent or broker," Karen says. "In both cases, they're taking advantage of the program."

Those who sign up for the NGCOA's insurance plan do so because they receive the same or better coverage for a smaller premium than what their current provider is willing to offer at renewal time, Karen says.

"As you can imagine, renewal time is when course owners inquire more," he says.

Because of the financial pressure health insurance exerts on a facility's budget, the benefit is viewed as closely by management as a weekend warrior eyeing a 5-foot birdie putt. Workers often are asked to pay 20 to 30 percent of the cost of their coverage.

"As clubs have struggled financially during the past five to 10 years and have looked for ways to cut budgets, health insurance is one of those areas they look at," Woodhead says. "Typically, they might ask the employee to pay more of the premium."

Typically, health-care costs amount to about 10 percent of a facility's annual budget, and rising health-care costs concern many.

"One of the concerns is that golf companies and clubs can't raise their green fees fast enough to keep pace with the increases in fixed expenses, such as health-care insurance," says Gary Sciarrillo, general manager of Great River Golf Club in Milford, Conn. "To that end, we're always looking for the best buy in health insurance. We involve our employees in the process, making sure we have a health plan that allows them access to doctors in our area.

"I involve our staff in the process because I want them to suffer as much as I do with the issue," Sciarrillo adds jokingly.

Because of the seasonal nature of a golf course staff, especially in the Northern states, some workers get left out in the cold when it comes to complete health-insurance coverage.

"It goes down the chain of command," Woodhead says. "Because of the full-time nature of the position, perhaps the superintendent will have coverage. But the club might be less willing to pay for coverage for people who aren't working for several months."

Smaller facilities with perhaps three or four full-time employees are more prone to shy away from providing health-care coverage to workers. Larger clubs or resorts that can have several dozen or more



Great River Golf Club makes sure its employees have a health plan that allows them access to area doctors. Photo: Bob Grier Photography

full-time employees usually will offer some type of health-care coverage in their benefits packages.

"A facility that has, say, a golf course superintendent, a golf club manager and a golf professional doesn't have much leverage to get a group plan with discounted rates," Woodhead says. "It's different for a facility that has between 20 and 200 employees."

Different options

Some golf course employees, even those who are full-time, sometimes opt to self-insure, often with the club or company they're working for contributing some level of monetary compensation toward the coverage. Woodland says perhaps 30 percent of superintendents throughout the country are self-insured. An insurance plan can cost anywhere between \$5,000 and \$6,000 per individual.

Often, there are levels of coverage that vary for full-time employees, part-time employees who work more than 30 hours and part-time employees who work less than 30 hours a week.

"Our club provides health insurance for full-time employees only," says Steve Kurta, golf course superintendent at Tuscarora Golf Club in Marietta, N.Y. "A full-time employee is anyone working 30 hours a week or more at least six months a year. I have some employees who would rather have the extra money in their paychecks and risk having no health insurance. It's usually single guys with no kids."

That's not surprising considering almost one quarter of Americans have no health insurance. Many young people just entering the work force or who have worked less than five years opt not to pay for health insurance.

The Miami Beach Golf Club offers health

insurance for its employees, most of whom work full-time.

"One of our advantages is that we don't really have any seasonal workers," says golf course superintendent Rick Reeves. "We go around the year here."

Some employees take advantage of unique opportunities when it comes time to seek health insurance. Eighteen workers at Forest Dunes Golf Club in Gaylord, Mich., a state with a strong tradition of labor rights, belong to the Detroit Carpenters Union. They belong to the union because the Carpenters Pension Fund owns Forest Dunes.

"Every hourly worker receives insurance after a probationary period," says Jim Buck, golf course superintendent at Forest Dunes. "It helps them because even when they aren't working, they can keep the insurance year-round. It costs them in the form of union dues."

Workers at municipally-owned golf courses often are designated as town or city employees and thus have access to benefits including health care, Woodhead says.

Size matters

Working for a large firm, such as a hotel chain or golf course management company, has its advantages. Because these companies employ more workers, they usually can attain more affordable health-care coverage.

"Health insurance comes with being employed here," says Robert Schmeck, general manager at the Marriott Seaview Resort in Absecon, N.J. "It's one of myriad benefits Marriott offers its employees."

Seaview employs 550 people, 55 to 60 of whom are on the golf side of the business. Schmeck says there's a copay for health insurance in which the employer pays 67 percent and the worker pays the remainder.

Billy Casper Golf pays 80 percent of its workers' health-insurance costs, according to Doug Juhasz, general manager and director of golf at the BCG-managed Wintonbury Hills Golf Course in Bloomfield, Conn.

"We have 40 full-time and seasonal employees," Juhasz says. "Six are year-round, and the rest are 10-month, eight-month or six-month employees. If you work 39 hours a week for a period of 10 months a year, you get full benefits."

Wintergreen (Va.) Resort is proactive with its employee benefits package, providing medical and dental benefits for its more than 500 associates, says Fred Biggers, golf course superintendent at the facility. The resort covers 70 percent of the coverage costs for full-time workers (32 hours or more per week, year-round).

Attracting workers

Even though health insurance can be expensive, enlightened employers view health-insurance coverage as a necessary cost of doing business and a tool to retain good workers, especially those that must be lured back after being out of work for several months.

"It's certainly a tool to keep good people on our staff long-term," Juhasz says.

"It helps keep employees here that might jump to another job for higher pay," says Don Cole, golf course superintendent at the Troon Golf-managed Teravista Golf Club in Austin, Texas.

Health insurance is a factor with the new hires, Kurta says.

"They will go elsewhere if you don't have a competitive package, and conversely, they will come to you if you do," he says.

Biggers believes good health insurance and dental/vision benefits are important tools when taking good care of employees and they're important tools when hiring and recruiting new associates.

Great River has various tiers of coverage for full-time, seasonal and hourly workers.

"We see the coverage as a way to motivate good workers to strive towards the highest level of benefits and a career position here," Sciarrillo says.



Sciarrillo

Workers' comp

Unlike health-care insurance, workers' compensation insurance is mandated in most states and is a business expense less flexible than health insurance. However, it isn't as big an issue.

"As I travel around the country and meet with owners and operators, seldom do I hear grievances about workman's comp," Karen says. "It's an issue really only for those who have sizeable claims and find it hard to get coverage again or get back a favorable rating. But that is going to be a small percentage of courses."

Sciarrillo says Great River hasn't had a workers' comp claim since he's been there, which has been four years.

"You have to be fairly aggressive with your insurance provider to make the insurance works for you and protects your property against unwarranted claims," he says. GCN

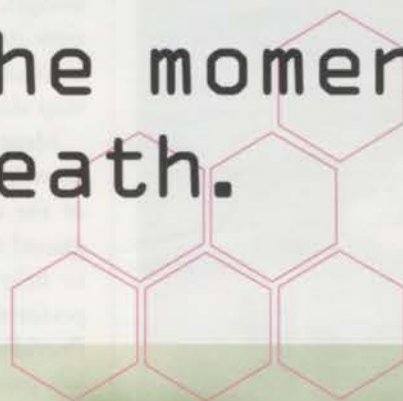


Karen

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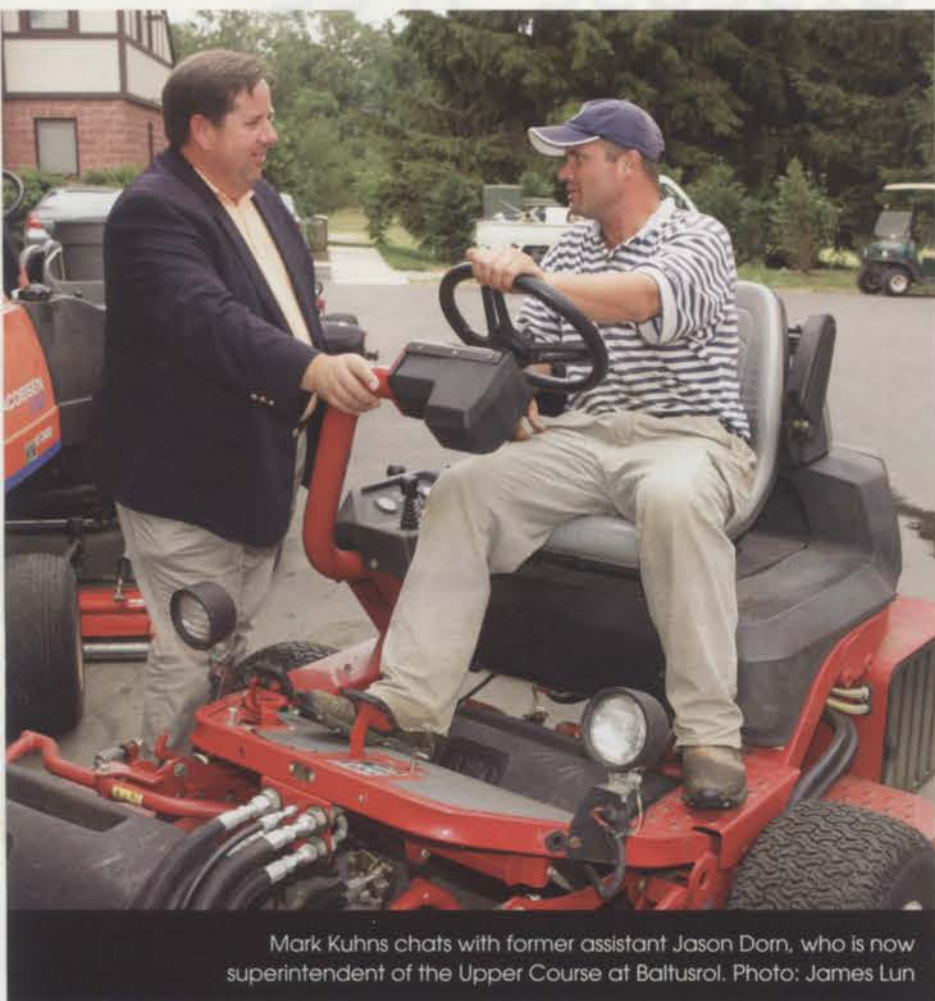
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A teacher's wisdom

SUPERINTENDENTS HELP GUIDE ASSISTANTS TO REACH THE NEXT LEVEL OF THEIR CAREERS



Mark Kuhns chats with former assistant Jason Dorn, who is now superintendent of the Upper Course at Baltusrol. Photo: James Lun

by MICHAEL COLEMAN

Remember your first week on the job as an assistant golf course superintendent? You probably had numerous questions about irrigation, disease prevention and how to best assign work to the crew. Most likely, it was daunting. But, with any luck, you had an experienced superintendent who guided you and kept you in line.

Now, as a golf course superintendent, you're on the other end of that relationship. So how do you successfully mentor the assistant superintendent who looks up to you?

Follow the leader

First, superintendents need to realize it's a priority. Between calls with vendors, "putting out fires" and planning next year's

budget, superintendents need to set aside time in their daily schedule to coach their assistants. They can help hone their leadership skills and encourage them.

Mentoring includes one-on-one activities in which a superintendent imparts some of the experience and knowledge he has gained throughout his years in the business to help improve his assistant's ability to perform his job better and more efficiently. Providing feedback to an assistant about his job performance is a key to helping him meet the superintendent's standards. For example, a well-planned period of initiation activities can get new assistants off to a good start, says Steve Phillips, golf course superintendent at Sebastian Hills Golf Club in Xenia, Ohio.

"I try to spend a week going through everything," Phillips says. "I meet with them a couple days and check their work after that."

The sooner a superintendent can inspect what an assistant has done, the better his feedback will be. Superintendents should target the tasks that need improvement and use praise generously when the task is accomplished to the specifications, Phillips says.

Any advice superintendents give should involve some specific points, not general comments that might be misinterpreted. For example, if a bunker an assistant just finished repairing isn't 100 percent to a superintendent's satisfaction, he should say exactly what needs to be addressed and not just that it looks bad. But he shouldn't step in and rework a task himself, leaving the assistant out of it. It might be faster, but doing that will rob him of motivation and eliminate the superintendent's best chance of improving the assistant's performance next time.

Phillips advises superintendents make sure a task is done right the first time.

"Get in the ground and show the assistant you're not afraid to get dirty," he says. Let them know your way of fixing something but give them some leeway to try a new

approach. With hands-on work, hands-on mentoring is a good fit – to a point.

As with many aspects of the job, technology provides tools veteran superintendents didn't have access to early in their careers. Videos are an example. With a video, Phillips can go through it, stop it and explain things. If he has any personal touches to add, he can do so then. He also instructs his assistants to take notes while watching videos to help them retain more of the information.

However, getting too focused on the task at hand can impede seeing problems on the course. Mark Kuhns, director of grounds at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., urges his assistants to see the big picture when they're working.

"Look around, stand in the middle of a green, and look in all directions and pick up on things," he says. "Be the worst curmudgeon the course has."

This kind of deliberate approach to seeing everything helps overcome tunnel vision and allows an assistant to notice flaws.

Dan Kilpatrick, an assistant at Baltusrol's Lower Course, says Kuhns has taught him the key to maintaining a top-quality course is seeing the big picture. Kuhns encourages the whole team to pursue excellence.

"Baltusrol demands a lot," Kilpatrick says. "Mark asks for a lot, and guys give it to him."

The demands are tempered by a great deal of support, Kilpatrick says. With so much experience, there's always some valuable insight from Kuhns that makes a project progress more smoothly. His input gives you more confidence, he says.

Are you experienced?

Not only should superintendents make sure assistants perform tasks properly and efficiently, they also should be sharing their expertise with them. With 17 people on staff, including a mechanic and one assistant, John Malloy, golf course superintendent at Bearpath Golf Club in Eden Prairie, Minn., has plenty of chances to

share his expertise.

"The best education is showing up to work every day and learning," he says. "The books and the university tests are one thing, but what happens in the field is totally different."

Malloy tells a story about an assistant he worked with years ago who asked Malloy to educate him about the irrigation system. Malloy showed the young man, who aspired to be a head superintendent, how to fix a diabolical leak in the system. After two days of working on the problem and fixing it, the young man came to Malloy exhausted saying, "When I said I need to know about irrigation, I need to know how often you water, when you water. I can hire guys to fix leaks."

But Malloy told him even if he hires someone to do that, he still has to be able to handle it himself, because at some point during a weekend when he's on his own, the problem might arise. Sure enough, years later, the young man saw Malloy at a golf industry trade show and said, "Man, you were dead on," because he was stuck fixing a leak the weekend before.

Malloy also encourages assistants to gain experience at courses in various regions of the country because there are different lessons to be learned at each. He also urges his younger staff to work for a couple different superintendents so they can experience multiple ways of approaching issues and challenges. If an opportunity with a veteran superintendent isn't available, he advises to look for a new course under construction.

"That's where you learn from the bottom up," Malloy says. "You actually see it go in

the ground, come out of the ground and how you grow it in, and your opportunities are 100-percent better to become a superintendent."

Keeping tabs

Record-keeping is another valuable tip for assistants. Phillips, who started at Sebastian Hills when the grow-in began in 2000, encourages his staff of nine to keep a record of what's accomplished on the course daily, which is something several veteran superintendents say they've done their entire careers.

Malloy has kept a journal every day for most of his 40 years in the business. He tells his crew it's valuable for tracking weather trends and following past activities, such as repairs, on the course. In five minutes, an assistant can capture the kinds of details that slip away in time, such as who was late for work and what tasks were completed.

Malloy's assistant, Greg Christian, is a former superintendent himself. The opportunity to work with Malloy arose about a year ago, and Christian saw it as a good opportunity to get back into the business. The way Malloy deals with people on his staff was attractive to Christian, who has known Malloy many years.

"He's very intuitive, reading people in their state of mind," Christian says about Malloy.

Christian says one reason that makes Malloy a good mentor is his guiding philosophy. Malloy's approach is to manage aspects of the job such as fuel but lead people. He shows trust in those that work for him, Christian says.



Mark Kuhns and former assistant Scott Bosetti, who is now superintendent at White Beeches Golf Club in Haworth, N.J. Photo: James Lun

Responsibility

The experience an assistant acquires correlates to the responsibility he's given. Malloy wants to have them stretch a bit, but not be overwhelmed. He asks his assistants for input about buying equipment, for example, but doesn't allow them to purchase anything independently.

Many industry veterans say superintendents who give their assistants too much responsibility face a double-edged sword. If the assistant can't handle it, the work suffers and so does the course. That reflects poorly on the superintendent. If the assistant is a go-getter, the superintendent might have an easier time of it, until the owner notices who's handling the responsibilities. At that point he could be replaced with someone younger, cheaper and more in tune with technology.

Finding the balance between boiling

Mentoring tips

Veteran superintendents have these tips for assistants to remember:

1. Be honest.
2. Communicate about disease trends with other crews in your region.
3. Learn how to calibrate your spraying equipment correctly.
4. Understand you can learn from everyone on your crew.
5. Don't let 14-hour days burn you out.
6. Read trade magazines for the latest information.
7. Make videos interactive by discussing relevance to your course.
8. Use online classes to enhance your knowledge.
9. Be good to your mechanic.
10. Get experience in different climates.
11. Be aware the pressure of being in charge can alter your interactions with people.
12. Work at a course during the construction/grow-in phases.
13. When aerifying, avoid sprinkler heads at all costs.
14. Become a Class A superintendent, then strive for certification.
15. Network with veteran superintendents at industry shows.
16. Be mobile in your career.
17. Talk with your superintendent regularly about your responsibilities.
18. Don't become complacent.
19. Get close to your detractors and learn how to address their concerns.
20. Tell yourself you can accomplish anything, then do it.



over and being boxed in is critical. Richard Spear, golf course superintendent at Piping Rock Club in Locust Valley, N.Y., tempers his assignments based on the assistant's background. If a guy shows up at his course

straight out of school as a second assistant, he doesn't know the program and wouldn't be expected to contribute much right away. That's where coaching comes into play, turning a green graduate into a greens

expert. Spear likes the attitudes he's seen from assistants because most of them want more responsibility. With responsibility comes opportunity, including playing golf. The 20-year veteran sees value in playing various courses.

"I encourage them to play golf so they know what a good course is and what's over the top," Spear says.

Apparently, the lessons paid off for some of his former assistants. Craig Carrier is now the superintendent at Bethpage State Park in New York, host to the 2002 U.S. Open. Dave Pughe is a scratch golfer and runs the crew at the Garden City Golf Club New York.

Spear's staff of 25, including two assistants and a second assistant, completes many in-house and construction projects at the course. Spear focuses his team on taking the work seriously, but not themselves.

"We try to have fun at Piping Rock," he says. "There's very little whipping involved."

Supervisory role

One key aspect of the job assistants at larger courses struggle with is how to delegate tasks to the crew effectively, says Kuhns, who joined Baltusrol in 1999 and has a staff of about 60 to maintain 36 holes. Kuhns says some assistants in the industry find it difficult to make the transition from someone who accomplishes specific tasks to the person who manages the staff. These assistants tend to be too involved in basic maintenance to the detriment of the staff's effectiveness.

"If they're spending their time hands-on all the time, somebody isn't being supervised properly," he says.

Kuhns says assistants should show the staff what needs to be done and then supervise, not micromanage, a task. Depending on the size of the crew, this challenge might be one the superintendent faces. When assistants are managing junior members of the staff, superintendents should make sure they go back to check the progress and quality of work, as they've been doing for them, Phillips says.

One of Phillips' assistants for the last three years, Todd Bottorff, got a chance to do that while Phillips was out of town. The pair kept in touch, and Phillips coached him on dealing with a sick employee, broken-down equipment and other issues. It was a good learning experience, Bottorff says.

Bottorff comes from a nontraditional background of factory work rather than university instruction. He says the kind of

(continued on page 49)

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High-tech evolution

COMPUTERIZED EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE IS AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS DIVIDENDS IN THE FUTURE



A computer program that tracks equipment, parts and labor costs, and schedules can make a shop manager's job easier. Photo: The Toro Co.

by
DOUG
SAUNDERS

During the past decade, the increased demand for optimum course conditions has put added pressure on all aspects of course management. That pressure to take the golf course to the next level filters down to every member of the maintenance staff. The mechanic in the shop is no exception.

It's a shop manager's job to keep the various pieces of equipment used to condition a golf course working instead of idling in the shop. This requires the ability to set a regular maintenance schedule, keep machinery sharp, keep detailed records of repairs and operating costs, and keep a running inventory of parts.

Each shop manager has developed his own way to juggle these aspects, from using index cards to saving old receipts to keeping stacks of legal pads with notes crammed in the top drawer of an office desk. Each system has been developed through trial and error and has served a purpose for each facility in its own way. However, with current technology, isn't there a better way?

Past ways of keeping track of equipment maintenance have inspired the development of computerized maintenance management software. These programs allow any maintenance facility to track the many facets of machine maintenance easily to become more efficient. During the past 20 years, many such programs have been developed for many industries, but their widespread acceptance by golf course mechanics has been slow.

Golf course superintendents were faced with making the transition to becoming computer savvy first when sophisticated irrigation systems demanded a more technical way to operate them to their fullest potential. The repair shop is probably the last area of a golf operation that hasn't made a full-scale swing toward computerization, but it's a trend that's becoming more popular. A computer program that tracks all pieces of machinery at a facility, as well as maintenance schedules, parts requirements and labor costs, is a tool that could only help make the shop manager's job easier and his operation more efficient.

Jay Rehr was the head mechanic at Augusta National Golf Club for 16 years and now is a consultant to shop managers in the Southeastern United States. Rehr has seen how the position has changed first hand and is a strong proponent of using computer programs.

"The position of the shop mechanic has changed dramatically," he says. "The demand on the machinery has changed.

Mowing heights are lower; the time allowed for completing tasks has shrunk, which puts more demand on keeping machinery on the course working; and the machinery itself has become more complex."

With more demands, it's advisable to find new ways to coordinate the tasks to create a more efficient operation, and the use of CMMS programs is an important tool, Rehr says.

"For many years, a mechanic would just deal with things as they came, and the concept of records was usually confined to a series of notes," he says. "While this method could be functional in the past, the drive to take golf course management into a more business-like approach demands the need for better ways to manage the shop."

A better way to manage

The Broadmoor Resort – which will host the 2008 U.S. Senior Open – in Colorado Springs, Colo., includes three golf courses that are maintained with a staff of 70 employees during the summer. Don Steele, the head mechanic, is responsible for maintaining a \$2-million fleet that comprises 250 pieces of equipment. Steele has been working in the shop for 28 years and has made the transition to a computerized management program.

"I've worked here for many years but really didn't comprehend all of the complexities until I took the top spot in 1998," he says. "When I began to inventory our parts room, I found shelves of parts that were obsolete because we didn't have those types of ma-

chines on the property anymore. We had a computer program, but it wasn't being utilized completely. It was then I figured there had to be a better way to manage things," Steele says.

First, Steele assigns a number to each piece of equipment and then builds a file that includes make, model, serial number, maintenance schedule and parts requirements. He also has an inventory catalog so he can tell what parts he has in stock at any time, what parts he needs for future maintenance schedules and what he needs to order.

"The program prompts me about regular maintenance schedules, so it helps set up the work schedule for my three mechanics," he says. "I can determine what parts are needed much faster than if I just had old notes. And at the end of the year, it's beneficial for taking inventory of my parts supply and developing a restocking order."

Another important advantage to Steele's computer files is he can keep track of all costs associated with each piece of machinery, be it regular maintenance or how often the machine is being repaired. This helps determine when a machine isn't being cost effective enough to use.

"For example, you might have two greens mowers and one runs just great, while another always seems to be needing some type of repair," Steele says. "With a click of a button, I can tell the entire life history of the machine. This is helpful when it comes time to decide which pieces of equipment are still serving their purpose and which ones are becoming a financial burden. Hav-



Onboard software helps keep track of hours of operation and internal temperatures on Jacobsen mowers. Photo: Adam Slick

Solving the Problem of NITROGEN LOSS

Nitrogen feeds turf, and vigorous, healthy turf is an environmental benefit. It's as simple as that. But nitrogen must be managed to help protect that environment. Until recently, however, few innovations to improve nitrogen efficiency have been made.

University research has repeatedly revealed that a large portion of urea-based fertilizer is wasted with each application through environmental factors. Nitrogen, being naturally unstable, is lost to the atmosphere, leaching, and runoff. For years, one solution was to put a coating around the urea. This helped slow down volatilization, but left the urea unavailable to the plant until the coating deteriorated by mechanical or microbial degradation. Or, urea molecules are chemically bonded together in long chemical chains waiting for soil microbes to break the chains rendering the nitrogen available for plant use. The problem is that the rate of microbial activity is closely tied to soil temperatures—in cool temperatures activity slows, and in warmer temperatures activity increases. The result is that the turf manager has less control over nitrogen release and availability. Now, new advancements in nitrogen technology provide real solutions to the challenges of unstable nitrogen.

An Unstable Element

As an element, nitrogen seeks to find equilibrium. From the moment urea nitrogen is applied, up to 30 percent can be lost. Upon application, urea encounters moisture and a soil enzyme called urease, which immediately begins to break down urea into ammonia and carbon dioxide, which can then escape into the atmosphere. Because so much nitrogen is lost during ammonia volatilization, rates are typically adjusted higher to

accommodate this waste, leading to over-application and potential turf "burn."

Once the nitrogen is applied, it's subjected to further environmental factors as it works its way into the soil. After urea breaks down into ammonia, it enters the soil where a series of biochemical reactions occur called nitrification, or the transformation of ammonium (NH_4^+) nitrogen to Nitrite (NO_2^-) and further to Nitrate (NO_3^-) nitrogen. Plants easily use both ammonium and nitrate nitrogen. But, nitrate nitrogen is subject to leaching, while ammonium nitrogen can be held by the soil much longer.

And, finally, excessive rain or irrigation can undermine nitrogen fertilization. In saturated soil, bacteria that are deprived of oxygen will strip oxygen molecules from nitrates, a reaction called denitrification. This converts the nitrates into nitrogen gas (N_2) and nitrous oxide (N_2O), both of which quickly escape into the atmosphere.

By stabilizing the nitrogen, more applied nitrogen stays available for plant use as intended, and out of groundwater, which makes more sense environmentally and financially.

Terry Gill, superintendent at Braeburn Country Club, commented, "From a money standpoint, the last thing you want is all your nitrogen going up into the atmosphere and not into the soil."

StabilizedNitrogen offers greater nitrogen efficiency and provides a rich, emerald green color response.

The Available Solutions

Today, there are three basic forms of nitrogen fertilizers available to superintendents to address these challenges, distinguished by their release rates and mechanisms: treated nitrogen, such as methylene urea; coated nitrogen, such as sulfur or polymer-coated urea; and StabilizedNitrogen™, a patented nitrogen stabilization process.

While all these technologies help reduce ammonia volatilization, both treated and coated urea require external factors, such as warmer soil temperatures

and microbial action, or specific moisture levels, to make the nitrogen available to the plant. And with coated urea, once the coating is cracked or broken down, the urea inside offers no advantages over standard urea. Treated and coated urea may take longer to provide color response in turfgrass, and release inconsistently over their effective time frame.

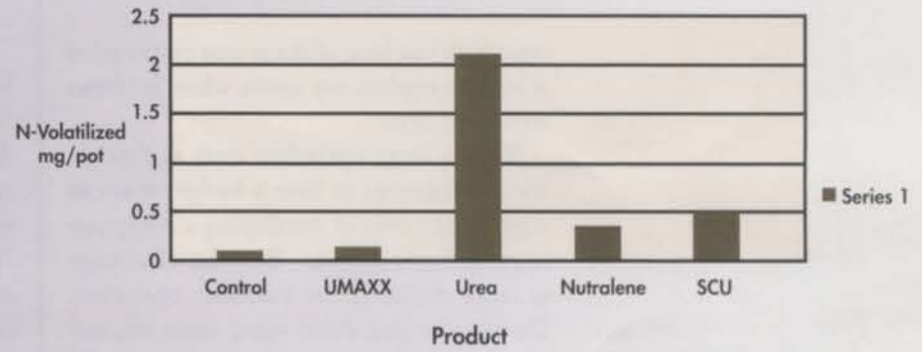
StabilizedNitrogen, however, works independently of external environmental conditions. Available only from AGRO-TAIN International, StabilizedNitrogen contains two unique, proprietary ingredi-



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Nitrogen Volatility



Purdue University - Kentucky Bluegrass Response Trials

StabilizedNitrogen provided better color response than IBDU and sulfur-coated urea.

University of Wisconsin - 2001 Bentgrass Trials

StabilizedNitrogen prevents loss of nitrogen to the atmosphere.

ents that inhibit volatilization and prevent leaching and denitrification, while still leaving nitrogen available to the plant. The stabilization technology allows the nitrogen to be available to the plant in ammonium form consistently over a longer period of time, providing quick response without flush growth.

Jack MacKenzie of North Oaks Golf Club in St. Paul, Minnesota remarked on the consistent release, "If we put down a slow release product, hit a hot moist temperature period in July, all that nitrogen is released because the

slow release product is being activated by the increase in microbial activity or the moisture. With the stabilized urea I don't have that. I don't get the peaks and valleys. It's just very consistent release of nitrogen."

University Research Results

In a 2001 University of Wisconsin study, StabilizedNitrogen was found to be approximately twice as effective as methylene urea, and nearly three times as effective as sulfur-coated urea at preventing ammonia volatilization. In Kentucky Bluegrass response trials at Purdue University, StabilizedNitrogen was found to provide better spring color response than standard urea, sulfur-coated urea, and IBDU. Additionally, because StabilizedNitrogen doesn't require specific weather or soil conditions to provide response, it has been found to provide a quicker green-up without causing flush growth. In fact, in over a dozen university studies, StabilizedNitrogen technology has been found to provide better results in every category: color, quality, nitrogen efficiency, length of performance and environmental impact.

Greener, Faster, Longer™

StabilizedNitrogen Technology is found in AGROTAIN International's flagship products: UFLEX™, UMAXX® are offered as StabilizedNitrogen fertilizers and are water-soluble, granular products that can be applied directly or as part

of fertilizer blends. UFLEX has been formulated to provide six to eight weeks of consistent response, while UMAXX offers 12 to 16 weeks of color and quality. HYDREXX is a new, soluble additive for urea-based, liquid fertilizer programs that superintendents add directly to their spray tank with their liquid urea or UAN solution. HYDREXX offers turf managers the ability to control the performance and response and to dial in the performance to match the specific conditions at your course.

Mike Kelly, superintendent at Edina Country Club in Minnesota, has been using HYDREXX in his fertilization program this year, "Color has become very important to golfers. Realizing that it's hard for a superintendent to balance color and playing conditions, you want firm and fast, but yet you want green. With the StabilizedNitrogen, I think that it is possible that you can get that because it does enhance color while at the same time keeping a balance in playing conditions and watering."

"Beyond just providing a better product," said Al Nees of AGROTAIN International "we're providing a better value. This technology makes nitrogen fertilization so much more efficient that a superintendent's cost-per-day of response can be significantly less than with other nitrogen sources. And now with HYDREXX, we've found that the value and cost-efficiency is even greater."

Superintendents continue to drive manufacturers and suppliers to deliver better results and more environmentally sound solutions, and demanding research and facts to prove performance claims. That dedication to improvement and proven innovation is what led to the development of StabilizedNitrogen Technology. Detailed university research can be viewed by visiting www.stabilizednitrogen.com.



ing a firm tracking of these true costs makes it easy to explain my needs when it comes to budget time.”

With a large operation such as Steele's, it's an advantage to have a budget that can support the cost of developing a computer management system. But the challenge is more daunting for a smaller operation. During the past three years, most maintenance budgets have been stretched to the limit partly because of cost increases for line items such as fertilizers and fuel. However, even a smaller operation can benefit from letting computers handle the necessary task of record-keeping, which is still an essential part of any shop operation.

Overcoming fear

The two issues that must be addressed are the time and money needed to incorporate a program for the shop and overcoming any fear of computers. A mechanic must view the computer as a useful tool that he'll be in control of instead of something that will take over. And, just as superintendents have had to make the adjustments to the sophisticated irrigations systems and spread sheets that now are a regular part of their job, machine shop managers also will need to operate in the same efficient manner.

“The older mechanics and technicians have learned to do so much of their job by just storing information in their head, but as these men retire, it will be difficult for new employees pick up where the others left off without some information trail,” Rehr says. “I tell mechanics that it's just smart to become computerized, but if not, they at least need to develop a paper trail of information for the people who takes their spots.”

Harold George, the head mechanic at the DuPont Country Club in Wilmington, Del., also has seen how the transformation to computers can be beneficial. George, who has worked at the facility for 36 years, is responsible for the equipment that maintains three championship courses.

“To be honest, in the old days, equipment maintenance was held together with bailing wire and chewing gum,” he says. “One of the big differences today is the improvement in the engineering of the equipment, which has made them more reliable but also more expensive. This means the mechanic must also be more sophisticated. Using a computer to help you makes sense. Mechanics need to look at the computer like it's a box of Snap-on tools. If you start to use them, you'll find out which parts will work for you.”

There's an array of programs for shop

managers that have been on the market for many years, such as Qqest and TRIMS. CMMS programs range in price from \$500 to \$4,000, depending on the program's sophistication. Although CMMS are used mostly at larger facilities, many in the industry feel that, in the near future, computer-tool use will be the norm in the shop, rather than the exception.

For example, The Toro Co. has been developing a program for several years called MyTurf. It's a Web-based program that's been designed to be as user-friendly as possible to help mechanics overcome the fear associated with using a new program.

The decision to invest in CMMS ultimately is driven by economics. With budgets being tightened, the desire of green committees and general managers has been to keep machinery running as long as possible. Regular equipment maintenance can lead to a longer life span for these expensive machines, and investing in technology to reduce maintenance costs and increase efficiency within the shop can help achieve that goal. GCN

Doug Saunders is a freelance writer based in Truckee, Calif. He can be reached at dougs@sierra.net.

Electric diagnosis

Advances in maintenance shops are found not only in office computers but in the machinery as well. During the past decade, manufacturers have developed several

advances in the diagnostic capabilities on equipment. The purpose of these smart machines, which have improved with added features, is to give mechanics a helping hand diagnosing electrical problems.

John Deere introduced a diagnostic feature on its 2500 series of greens mowers in 1998, according to product manager Tracy Lanier. A series of LED lights on the console informed the mechanic which circuit might be having a problem. Then, the next generation of the technology was introduced through the company's White Box system, which can determine the exact point where power is flowing and where an interruption occurs. This saves the mechanic valuable time

to make the necessary repairs. Currently, the White Box system is available on John Deere's greens and fairway mowers.

Jacobsen equipment also is beginning to feature imbedded technology. Onboard software keeps track of the hours of operation, internal temperatures and other data that helps diagnose trouble. The ability to take important data out of the equipment is similar to what has been happening in the auto industry, says Peter Whurr, vice president for product support for Jacobsen.

The information stored in the equipment can be downloaded via a laptop computer by a Jacobsen dealer in a matter of minutes, saving time.

“We have been developing the onboard technology for several years,” Whurr says. “We have perfected the ability of our representatives to do instant diagnostics in just the last 12 months.”

A property with a large equipment fleet can purchase the software to diagnose equipment itself.

The technology is available in the Jacobsen fairway, rotary and greens mowers. GCN

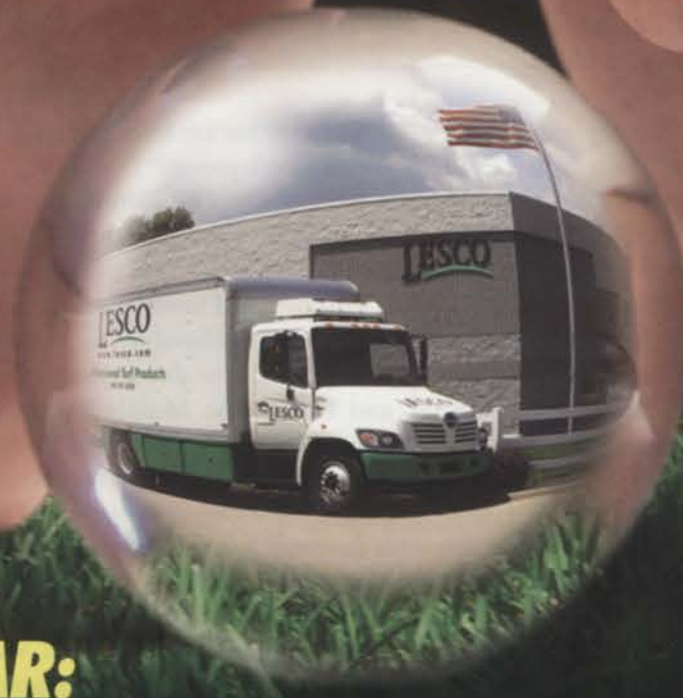


John Deere's White Box determines where power interruption occurs. Photo: John Deere

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by JOHN WALSH

Photos by John Walsh

Editor's note: During the annual summer meeting of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, which was in Chicago this year, Golf Course News hosted a roundtable with six GCBAA members to discuss the golf course development industry. Participants were Rick Boylan from Mid-America Golf and Landscape, Steve Christman from Eagle Golf & Landscape Products, Kurt Huseman from Landscapes Unlimited, Mick Jones from the Toro Co., Scott Pate from Seaside Golf Development and Bob Pinson from Course Crafters. The following is an excerpt from the discussion.

GCN: Elaborate on the commonalities of new projects being developed. What kind of deals are getting done?

Pate: There aren't as many residential developments.

Boylan: I agree. The new courses that we're seeing seem to be at the high end. It's more public-sector stuff. There's also many renovations coming.

Huseman: What we're seeing at Landscapes is the big-time, second home market. Retirement home communities are going up in primary markets. It's more than urban sprawl. It has more to do with capitalizing on money coming from the Northeast and California, where people are divesting themselves of their primary home or taking equity out and getting second homes as more of an investment than anything else. There's quite a large market out there for us as far as new construction is concerned.

Christman: It's not always the high-end residential developments, but the retirement community type of residential development that provides affordable golf.

Huseman: I heard Pulte Homes has 30 golf projects coming down the pike. I'd say real estate is driving new golf course development. The real high end can be associated with real estate, or it could be just Sutton Bay-ish where it's remote, and there's a beautiful site dedicated to golf. That's more indicative domestically but worldwide also. People are looking at golf, but the economy is letting them do other things a bit more creatively.

GCN: What are some hot spots for golf course development?

Christman: The Dominican Republic, St. Lucia, St. Kitts. And there's a lot of stuff going down in Mexico.

Huseman: There's work internationally that's unbelievable, for example, the new golf course development in China and Korea. The Middle East is another example. Dubai can be much better than even Las Vegas as an entertainment area for people from Europe to go. Greg Norman is developing five or six courses over there. Russia is hot. Golf is a global business. Internationally, people are looking at what we've done here in the United States and are trying to figure out how to capitalize on what has worked. They would be typical American-type developments.

GCN: Are many American builders taking advantage of that?

Christman: Many Americans are involved independently, but there aren't as many companies involved.

Huseman: Mexico is more dominant with American firms. If the market is so good domestically, why do you go to China or Mexico?

Boylan: That's our feeling. It's comforting to all of us knowing that for what we're doing, we're doing what everyone else is trying to do.

GCN: What's the downside?

Pinson: There's no experienced people to do the work.

Huseman: Or people that are willing to travel and make that type of commitment. You're moving your family to an area where you're probably not used to. You've spent the majority of your career here in the United States going from state to state, and now you're going overseas. It's a cultural shock.

Christman: Materials and equipment become a huge problem. When you make a change to a drainage plan, and all of a sudden the guy wants 48-inch pipe when he had 24-inch pipe, it's probably going to be

four to five weeks before somebody gets that material. By the time you get it in a container, shipped, moved and get it through customs, brokers or whatever's involved, it's a huge time factor.

Huseman: When we built Sandy Lane in Barbados, there was a heavier labor component down there because you're not going to be able to get all the equipment you need to do the work. If you look at what's going on in Eastern Europe right now, you'll find the same thing. It's probably more labor-driven type of construction than it is equipment driven. I happen to have someone that worked for me who's over in the Czech Republic or Slovakia right now doing a job with an interpreter on his side because he's working with such a large labor component. How do you optimize your labor? That's what he's having to deal with.

GCN: What are some other differences between development in the States and overseas?

Huseman: Our standard in the United States is different than what the standard is, or what's acceptable, elsewhere.

Christman: If you compared golf course development in the United States to other countries, you can see how far advanced we are in a lot of areas, but they want golf.

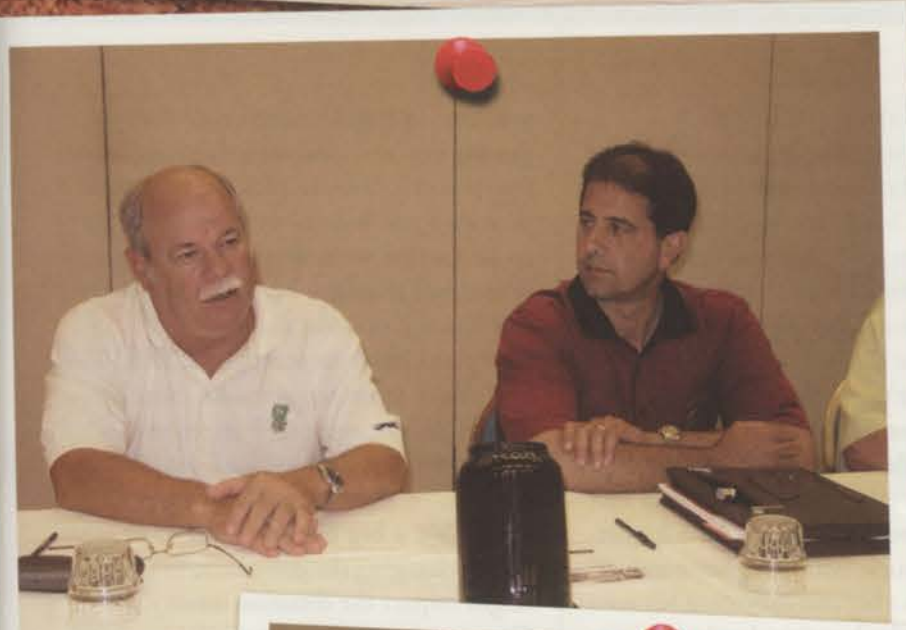
Jones: They don't have the infrastructure to support the specifications that we build here.

Boylan: Here in the States, the time frame for construction is short. It used to be a year to build a golf course, and now sometimes it's shortened to six or eight months, and we're hurrying up and doing that. Over there, you see a lot of things taking two years, and it has a lot to do with the labor source.

GCN: What's the biggest hindrance to golf course development?

Huseman: One is the whole entitlement process of getting a golf course leased to





From top left: Steve Christman, Mick Jones, Rick Boylan, Scott Pate, Kurt Huseman and Bob Pinson discuss golf course development.

be able to go into construction. That has to deal with getting subdivisions, titles and master plans approved. It's a big issue. Another is having the right amount of water and growing-in the golf course to the quality it needs to be.

GCN: What are some of the reasons behind permitting? Are they strictly tied to the environment?

Huseman: There are a lot of areas that are just trying to control growth. Look at the areas that are hot: Southern California, Florida, some of the second home markets. It's like the guy that bought his place 10 years ago, and all of a sudden he's seen it triple or quadruple in value. He doesn't want any neighbors now. So there's a lot of resistance as it relates to growth.

I don't track them closely, but I know some of the entitlement costs are significant. It's market driven. If you wanted to do a project in Texas right now, you would pay a fraction of what it would cost to entitle a project in California. It's a challenge, and

it affects us because we're at the tail end of the development process.

GCN: Are the environmental restrictions much tighter than five or 10 years ago?

Pinson: It's not the same everywhere. You have local restrictions, state restrictions. Restrictions in one county are different than restrictions in another, and it can all boil down to who can ease through the permitting process the best.

Pate: A misnomer for our industry is that developers, architects and builders don't care about the environment. So even though there are many restrictions, I don't feel it's a bad thing. Much of the stuff they do is good. Long term, it's a great thing. It's the democracy that you go through. It's not so much what you have to do but how you get there.

Huseman: Some of the rules and regulations test logic, and it becomes a little frustrating when they do, but by and large, I agree with what Scott says. We're much

more environmentally sensitive than what we were 20 years ago.

GCN: What can builders and architects do to reduce the cost of golf course development?

Huseman: I'm a firm believer in a collaborative process in project development. Adding experts in the construction side, working with experts in the design side, and for that matter, the entitlement side and getting on the same page early on but not losing the advantage of bringing a team together at the beginning of a project.

The traditional delivery method almost excludes the contractor or suppliers from getting involved early on. If you had a team early on attacking an issue, you would be much more successful in meeting project objectives. That's tied to the initial delivery method, whether it's owners or architects that are tied to utilizing that delivery to complete a project.

Boylan: There needs to be communication between all the different sectors – architects, engineers, etc., and everyone needs to have the big picture of the development. For example, knowing you don't have to move dirt from this side to that side and knowing you can utilize it for later use, that's a savings to everyone.

Christman: Some projects are definitely overengineered, and there are places that design a project to cut down on that kind of stuff.

Jones: We see people use value engineering once the price of pipe and wire come in. Prices might be three times what they were a year and a half ago when the original bid was made. They just keep trying to value engineer things out of the project.

Huseman: It's so difficult to avoid being cast as the contractor that's taking advantage of an owner when, quite frankly, it's market conditions that are driving our prices.

Jones: Owners can check the commodity pricing daily and can see what, say, copper is doing.

Huseman: We're basing much of our pricing on specific prices at the time a proposal or bid is submitted, so as escalation occurs, the contractor isn't burdened with taking that to ownership. The escalation has been significant in the last two years.

Boylan: Going back to permitting, that's how they wrap up everything together so everything is as current as can be when the permits are ready.

Pinson: To help our industry right now, simplicity needs to be the word we all get back to. Let's play to have fun and have a good time, and not move a million yards of dirt.

Huseman: What's driving the industry is the real estate development. All of us would agree you can build courses a lot less expensively, especially if you started the process off at the beginning with lot of planning that's carried on through design and construction. The bottom line is that certain people are buying homes in certain developments because they're expecting a particular product.

Pate: That's right. It's market driven. People wanted the 'wow' factor. A lot of the public golf courses cost a lot to build and are hard to play.

Jones: For the day-to-day public person to spend \$100 to \$120 just to go out and play a round of golf that's going to take five

to six hours to shoot a 120, well ...

Huseman: Irrigation is an area where we have seen a lot of escalation in the last five to eight years. Mick, what's driving that?

Jones: From the manufacturer's side, we've had relatively small increases in material. With some designs, pipe sizes have gone up, and some of that is from the demands of the architect or the consultant, be it for environmental control or water distribution.

But the residential guy that's spending a million dollars on a house wants a very nice golf course, and it's going to be a higher-challenging course with a higher-name architect. There's a big cost difference between that and a regular housing development or retirement home where a guy is just going to hit the ball around.

Boylan: The expectations for golf have changed dramatically. It's wall to wall coverage and pristine conditions, and if there's something brown, than there's something wrong.

Jones: It's all what the expectation of the club is, and who is going to manage it.

Boylan: It's the same thing with the cart paths on golf courses. The perception there is the lower-budget courses have asphalt, and the higher-budget courses have concrete. Some people like the asphalt because of the appearance.

GCN: Are the majority of the projects you're working on public?

Huseman: I'm not sure whether we would say there's a majority of public projects. It might be public in the sense that it's semiprivate, in which you're going to start off with public play and eventually end up going to a private club. It's not necessarily public daily-fee as it was defined four or five years ago.

GCN: Are there instances in which you won't accept a particular project?

Pinson: Some can be difficult sites. Based on the size of your company, you might not want something that might have a lot of rock on it, or it might not be in the part of the country that you're familiar with or worked previously. Also, based on what the owner wants to spend and what you really know it's going to cost, you might decline to do that project.

Huseman: It's not about making a profit. You have X number of employees that have been with you for a long time and are depending on your ability to sell work and be able to put food on their table and put their kids through school. There's more burdens than just hand picking the plums. You're going to get a rotten apple, and the best thing

you can do is just understand what you're getting into and deal with the problem the best you can. You can pick the projects and pick who you want to work with. You have to be careful with that situation because sometimes it might be better in the long run if you don't take the job.

Boylan: From my standpoint, I deal with that more with renovations. Sometimes you might not agree or disagree with what they're doing, or they might not be doing enough, or the things that they're doing don't have a big enough impact, or what they're changing the golf course to and from might impact the situation down the road. Construction for us is more geographical.

GCN: What changes have you seen during the past five years?

Pate: We've been seeing a lot of renovations.

Huseman: Or retrogrades. Courses go through a couple of renovations, and then all of a sudden they want to get back to something like the original golf course design. Those projects can involve an entire brand new irrigation system, greens, tees, bunkers, to the point where they're basically a new project. There's not as much shaping and you're not going to move as much dirt, but you're going to do everything else.

Boylan: The advantages of the amount of work have changed. With the economy and the amount of new construction slowed, renovations have picked up.

Huseman: If you rewind five years ago and had someone look in the crystal ball and say, 'Well there's a top end in site,' I don't think anyone is going to make that forecast anymore because the market almost goes against what common sense tells you.

Pate: A lot of the growth can be attributed to the baby boomers.

Christman: Growth could be huge if you look at the number of baby boomers who are starting to reach retirement age. If the C and D golfers who play golf once or twice a year all of a sudden have the money and time, they become the guys that are out there.

Huseman: I was talking to a leading home builder that does a lot of golf, which is a key component of their amenities. It conduct surveys relating to why people buy there. Golf is like No. 27 on the list. We, as golf developers and builders, are saying they're buying there because golf is a top-three reason. It's not.

Christman: It's important for people to live on a golf course because it drives property values. GCN

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Cover 'em up

Preventing fairway aerifier tines from hitting sprinkler heads during aerification has been a challenge since fairway aerifiers were invented. Using wire flags or turf-marking paint are two ways to make sprinkler heads more visible to equipment operators. Another way is to cover sprinkler heads with 12-inch-by-12-inch, 16-gauge steel plates. This method is being used at Lakewood Country Club in Rockville, Md., where former equipment mechanic Larry Baxter Jr. fabricated the pieces.

To prevent damage to the sprinkler heads while at the same time preventing damage to the aerifier or tines, a steel plate is placed on top of each sprinkler head, quick-coupler valve and any other piece of irrigation or drainage equipment before the aerifying process begins. A staff member will know if he hit a plate by the loud sound it makes.

Baxter purchased two 4-foot-by-8-foot, 16-gauge steel sheets that cost about \$75. He used a circular saw with a special steel-cutting blade and made 32 plates from each sheet. Then he grinded the sharp edges smooth and painted each plate "safety" yellow with a rustproof paint that costs about \$35. It took about four or five hours to make the plates and was done during the off-season.

The staff fabricated 64 plates, which is enough to stay ahead of the fairway aerifier. Since crew members started using the plates, they haven't damaged a single sprinkler head. Before using the plates, about 10 were damaged.

Assistant superintendent Mark McGreevy first learned about the idea while serving an internship at Loch Lomond Golf Club in Scotland, where the crew uses steel plates to prevent damaging sprinkler heads when topdressing fairways.



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 35-year member of the GCSAA and can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in-hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits - as well as a few ideas of his own - with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

Got juice?

Hurricane Wilma caused widespread power outages Oct. 24, 2005, in southeast Florida. The Boca Rio Golf Club in Boca Raton, Fla., where Robert M. Randquist, CGCS, is director of golf course and grounds, received about 3.5 inches of rainfall and didn't have electricity for about five days. But Randquist was quick to respond. He purchased a used, portable electric generator to operate the irrigation pump station two days after the storm.

The generator is mounted on a trailer that can be transported easily by a 35-horsepower tractor or ¾-ton pickup truck. It has a Cummins, 6-cylinder, 300-horsepower diesel engine that produces about 225 horsepower at full load. It consumes between 14 and 18 gallons of diesel fuel per hour, depending on the electrical load, from a 150-gallon fuel tank. The electrical panel has one 480-volt plug through a 200-amp circuit; multiple 480-volt plugs, each on 50-amp circuits; one 240-volt plug through a 100-amp circuit; and four duplex 120-volt plugs, each with 30-amp circuits. It's capable of generating as much as 600 volts at 60 hertz.

An electrical contractor installed a transfer switch inside the irrigation pump house to allow the maintenance staff to switch from their regular electrical power source to the generator power safely. A junction box installed on the outside wall of the pump house allows for an easy connection for the extension cord from the generator. Once the generator is parked next to the pump house, it takes about 10 minutes to be completely operational. The generator also can be used to power the refrigerators, freezers and lights in the clubhouse, but not the air conditioners.

The cost for the completely refurbished generator was \$25,000. A new one can cost between \$45,000 and \$85,000, depending on the size and optional equipment.

Randquist also has two 5,500-watt portable generators that provide temporary power for the fuel island, soda machine, time clock, lights, office, telephones, etc., during a power outage at the maintenance building complex. GCN



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- 1-Full Reconstruction
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- 7-No Renovations Planned

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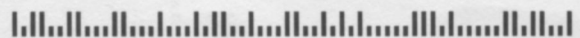
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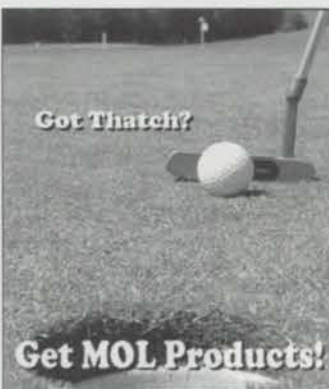


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(continued from page 34)

one-on-one guidance he gets from Phillips is detailed and professional.

"From day one, he's been very thorough in describing proper agronomic practices," Bottorff says.

For instance, the crew has learned proper irrigation repairs, the best watering strategy, spraying techniques and what to look for regarding disease.

"While I don't have the education, what I learn daily from him is as valuable as the education," Bottorff says.

Heading to class

Assistants also can develop their skills by taking advantage of learning opportunities. Kuhns always encourages his staff to attend Golf Course Superintendents Association of America seminars and the Golf Industry Show. The classes and talks from experts and veterans can be great tools for solving tricky problems on a course.

"If you can't find a solution in any of those, then you've missed the big picture," Kuhns says.

Much of the GCSAA training available is geared toward younger members, says Shari Koehler, director of education. Live presentations that are webcast or supplied on-demand to a computer help assistants

learn about subjects when they need it. Koehler gets positive feedback on technical material such as "Using Excel to Enhance Your Operation" and "Ideal Green Speeds for Your Golf Course."

"They're timely, relevant and affordable, so it's really a good fit for assistant superintendents," she says.

Koehler also encourages assistants to pursue softer skills.

"We really feel business communications and leadership skills training are crucial to being successful," she says, noting available seminars such as "Developing Financial Savvy in the Golf Business" and "Communications Skills for a Successful Career."

Considering everything, one fact remains: Assistants are steering their own careers with countless possibilities in front of them. All the advice and training won't mean much if they aren't working hard and striving for success.

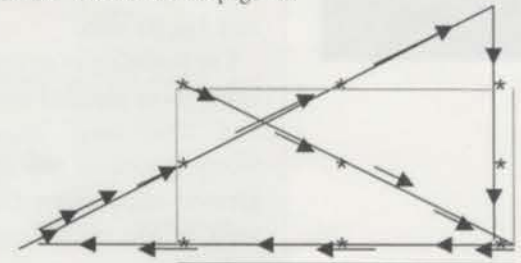
"They set their destiny," Kuhns says. "They make their careers." GCN

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This is the solution to the "Think outside the box" brain-teaser on page 10.



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Don't know, don't care

It's basketball season, so it seems appropriate to relate the great old story about Frank Layden, the pudgy, nerdy-looking former coach of the NBA's Utah Jazz.

Layden had a player on one of his teams who, despite all attempts at coaching, just didn't seem to be able to execute the plays properly. The fed-up Layden finally confronted him and demanded, "What is it with you? Is it ignorance or apathy?" The player thought about it for a second and then replied, "Coach, I don't know, and I don't care."

I'm probably as guilty as anyone else of using those dreaded words, "Don't know" and "Don't care," but as I grow older, I worry ignorance and apathy are the two greatest enemies we face in nearly every walk of life, including our happy little industry.

Consider this: I have a 14-year-old son. He does quite well in school, yet I'm occasionally shocked at what he doesn't know about American history. The other day, I mentioned Revolutionary War hero Nathan Hale, and he looked at me blankly. I sarcastically said, "You know ... the guy who played The Skipper on 'Gilligan's Island.'" He punched me on the shoulder for that one.

(Note: I call this the "Nintendo Effect." The brain of a teenager only has so much room, and if a choice has to be made between remembering the difference between Nathan Hale and Alan Hale Jr. versus remembering the cheat codes for "Super Mario," something has to give.)

Yet, I consider myself fortunate to have a kid who – I hope – defies these statistics from a recent study of American high school students:

- 59 percent could name all of the Three Stooges, but only 41 percent could name all three branches of government.
- Three quarters (74 percent) knew Bart Simpson makes his cartoon home in the mythical Springfield, but only 12 percent knew that Abraham Lincoln grew up in the very real Springfield, Ill.
- Only 2 percent knew James Madison was the father of the Constitution, while 100 percent knew that K-Fed is Brittany Spears' "baby-daddy."

OK, I made up that last bit (although it's probably not far from true). But the point is we, as a nation, are so focused on

the immediate or completely unfocused on anything that we've allowed ignorance and apathy to fill the void.

So, are you wondering what the heck this diatribe has to do with managing golf courses? Glad you asked. I will assume – because I know all of our beloved readers are intelligent, educated and, might I add, attractive – the issue isn't ignorance. Instead, let's consider the problem of apathy for a minute. Allow me to pose some questions:

- Have you ever thought or said, "That's the way we've always done it, so it must be right"?
- When is the last time you reviewed the policies you have in place and decided to 'blow them up' and start over?
- Can you honestly say you've brainstormed with other managers recently about the best way to attract or retain players/members?
- Have you ever written a letter to a local commissioner, congressman or other elected official to promote or defend the golf industry?
- How often do you visit other courses to seriously scrutinize what they do better than you?
- When is the last time you sat down with an employee and asked them how you could improve the operation?

Do you simply assume water, pesticides, fertilizers and other controversial tools will magically always be there when you need them?

- Are you limping along with a key employee who's more of a liability than an asset?
- Conversely, are you doing anything to grow and develop the great employees you have or just hoping they'll stick around?
- Have you ever thought very critically about your own skill set and made a plan to strengthen your management weaknesses?
- Do you automatically dismiss the opinions of employees or other managers because they 'just don't understand' your situation?
- Do you believe management techniques from other industries can't possibly be applied to your business?
- Are the words, "continuous improve-

ment," part of your business vocabulary?

• Do you assume because of budget or other limitations you can't be the best at something, so why bother trying?

I challenge everyone who reads this – superintendents, owners, general managers and others – to think about and answer those questions as candidly as possible. It's not a particularly fun activity, but in today's market, it's a painful but necessary process. It works. Let me tell you why.

Recently, I visited the headquarters of the Ariens Co., a major manufacturer of mowing equipment that primarily focuses on the landscape, lawn care and consumer markets. My mindset going into the trip was, "I can't learn anything from these guys because they're not big in the golf business." Wrong.

Ariens has instituted a companywide lean management philosophy. It's too complicated to detail in this space, but the short version is they constantly challenge every process, every step in every process and every substep in every step. It recognizes each unnecessary process, step and substep equals waste ... and waste costs money and

causes frustration. It's an employee-driven concept that assumes workers are intelligent and concerned. That, as you might have realized, is the opposite of ignorance and apathy.

TOO MANY MANAGERS AND BUSINESSES REJECT THE NOTION OF "BETTER" (CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT) BECAUSE "BEST" IS TOO HARD TO ACHIEVE.

One of the guiding principles of this management concept is summarized in a simple quote: "Best is the evil enemy of better." Think about it. Too many managers and businesses reject the notion of "better" (continuous improvement) because "best" is too hard to achieve. That, my friends, is throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Golf is like a fertile plot, waiting for the seeds of the continuous improvement movement to be sowed. You can sit on your butt thinking things are OK, bitch about the economy, fret about the weather or curse the competition. Or you can take matters into your own hands, fix things and prosper.

"Don't know" and "don't care" will lead to "don't survive" in the 21st-century golf market. Apathy kills. Don't be a victim.

GCN

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