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MARKET REFOCUS

I can remember not too long ago when it was considered a moral victory to have the name of the host golf course superintendent read at the on-site, post-tournament ceremonies throughout the PGA Tour. More times than not, however, superintendents weren't invited to closing ceremonies. Since then, respect for the superintendent's work has grown to the point where the names of hosting superintendents customarily are mentioned, appreciatively, within virtually every golf tournament television broadcast. Not surprisingly, the USGA always has been well ahead of the curve relative to recognizing the indispensable role of the golf course superintendent at its national championship events.

Now, thanks to recent GCSAA initiatives, the association's logo, with a short promotional sound bite, is presented within many TV broadcasts of PGA Tour, Champions Tour, LPGA Tour and major golf tournaments. While clearly this is deserved recognition/progress, it's time for the GCSAA to change gears and move beyond identifying itself as representing the nation's golf course superintendents (a necessary first step) to educating the national golf community regarding the person who brings such unique value to the game of golf as a golf course superintendent.

I've often said the game of competitive golf, like baseball, is a statistically intensive environment that lends itself well to self-promotion. (See my May 2005 GCI column). Similarly, the world of golf course maintenance also interfaces with a rich, to this date untapped, statistical environment that begs for attention. Accordingly, the time has come for the GCSAA to adjust its media approach to fill a new role as a media advocate for the previously unfocused on cultural world of the golf course superintendent and the profession that embodies this noble group of warriors.

For example, following are several sample statistical information packets that might be individually presented within

telecasts – together with voice-over commentary and a supporting visual with the GCSAA logo. These 15- to 30-second commercial segments would be used to stimulate public interest in the intriguing world of the golf course superintendent:

- Golf course superintendents throughout the country are entrusted with the responsibility for the care and highest quality maintenance of an estimated 2,062,500 acres of golf course properties, with an estimated total real estate value of \$20,625,000,000. (Data derivation: 16,500 courses multiplied by an average of 125 acres per course [all sizes] multiplied by \$10,000 average value per acre.)

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- Golf course superintendents throughout the country are tasked to develop and precisely manage operational maintenance budgets totaling an estimated \$11,550,000,000 annually. (Data derivation: 16,500 courses multiplied by the average operational budget [all size courses] of \$700,000.)

- Golf course superintendents collectively throughout the United States maintain an estimated 189,000 golf course greens, totaling an estimated 945,000,000 square feet of grass that are mowed an estimated total of 47,628,000 times each year. (Data derivation: 10,500 equivalent 18-hole courses multiplied by 18 greens per course at an average 5,000 square feet per green; then 189,000 greens multiplied by seven

cuts a week multiplied by a 36-week average golf season.)

- Golf course superintendents are responsible to efficiently manage the placement of an estimated 821,520,000,000 gallons of water on the nation's golf courses each year. (Data derivation: 130,400,000 gallons or 400 acre-feet per course a year within southern climates and 26,080,000 gallons or 80 acre-feet per course a year within northern climates roughly averages to 78,240,000 gallons per course a year throughout the country; then 10,500 equivalent 18-hole courses multiplied by 78,240,000 average gallons per course a year.)

Far more experienced public information professionals than I working for and with the GCSAA will be able to generate more meaningful data gems than I have presented here. Never has there been a more inviting, more rewarding road to travel. But this should be only the beginning of a much larger game to be played because not only is the golf course superintendent been long recognized as the most essential individual within operational golf – he or she is the imperative. There can be no golf without the golf course superintendent – playingwise, saleswise, manufacturingwise, or any-which-waywise.

I say this not to further praise Caesar; rather to encourage a well-defined, appropriately spread through time, educational-based marketing campaign that would educate America to the personage, educational depth and responsibilities of the golf course superintendent. Can there be a greater disconnect or any doubt that such a campaign is needed when recent industrywide surveys show the majority of superintendents fear annually for job security, often command less respect than seasonal laborers and generally are denied industry norm separation packages when leaving jobs?

I hope the day is soon approaching when once an individual earns the professional title of golf course superintendent, he or she will be accorded the same level and permanency of respect as employed engineers, accountants, lawyers and the like are shown within their professional fields. This day is long overdue. **GCI**