



Steve Mona is leaving the GCSAA to work at the World Golf Foundation.

## The GCSAA's new task

**T**he Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's board of directors began a task it hasn't had to face in 14 years. It started the process to replace c.e.o. Steve Mona, who announced he has taken the newly created position of c.e.o. of the World Golf Foundation.

Mona, 50, says he was approached in January by PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem about an executive position with the WGF but nothing was firm because the WGF's board didn't



determine anything at that time. "Nothing was solid," he says. "I needed to learn more about the job and the challenges and issues I would face. I eventually got a better insight and understanding of the job and a better feel for what I would do. It's a great opportunity to work in the game in a different way."

Mona elected to keep the job opportunity to himself until it was official. It wasn't agreed to until late last month, and he didn't want to bring up anything speculative. Also, he wanted to

honor the process the WGF board was going through.

"My wife was the only person who knew until I flew down to Texas and told (GCSAA president) Ricky Heine on (Sept. 23)," he says.

There seems to be a shared feeling of surprise about his move, some calling it bittersweet.

"I was surprised, but not shocked, because it was a matter of time before someone was going to recognize his abilities and give him one of those job offers he couldn't refuse," says Chuck Borman, staff member of the

Carolinas GCSA who worked with Mona when Borman was director of the CGCSA.

Current and former association board members say the new position is a testament to Mona's leadership and the strength of the association.

"Just as the GCSAA prospered under his leadership, so too will the World Golf Foundation achieve even greater accomplishments with Steve at the helm," Heine says.

Bruce Williams, CGCS, director of golf courses and grounds at the Los Angeles Country Club, says

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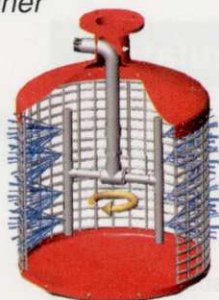
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one of Mona's strengths and fortes is developing relationships with allied industries and a lot of what he'll do in the future will deal with that.

Randy Nichols was president of the GCSAA when Mona was hired as the first c.e.o. of the association. Mona replaced executive director John Schilling. The board didn't hire an outside search firm, and the process took almost a year to complete.

Mona came to the GCSAA after serving for 10 years as executive director of the Georgia State Golf Association. He previously held positions with the U.S. Golf Association and the Northern California Golf Association.

"Steve was respected prior to

coming to the GCSAA, and he's probably even more respected now," Nichols says.

Williams also served on the committee that selected Mona. The fact that Mona's tenure lasted so long is a testament to the caliber of leader he is and the board's thoroughness in the hiring process, Williams says.

Williams doesn't speak about an individual's accomplishments, but rather the accomplishments of an organization during a specific era because several boards have come and gone. During Mona's era at the GCSAA, the organization has been in good shape, he says.

"While we weren't in a poor financial condition before Steve, he's leaving with a very sound

financial base in place for the organization," he says. "He's built a reserve, and there's little or no debt. Certainly, Steve and the elected leaders he worked with

deserve credit for that."

Another positive step Mona has overseen is the collaboration with the National Golf Course Owners Association and the Club

## Golf Course Industry earns editorial award

➤ This year, Golf Course Industry earned its third Eddie award for editorial excellence in three years by taking home the Gold Winner in the B-to-B: Recreation/sports/outdoors (full issue) category. The magazine earned the Bronze Winner in 2005 and 2006. Follo – a source that brings information to the publishing community – handed out gold, silver and bronze Eddie and Ozzie (design) awards of excellence in more than 100 categories at its annual Follo: Awards ceremony in late September at the Marriott Marquis in New York City. For more information, visit [www.folliomag.com](http://www.folliomag.com).



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Managers Association of America to form the Golf Industry Show. The GCSAA trade show's growth had fallen flat in recent years, and the new format seems to have brought new life to the show, Borman says.

Williams also cites the growth in the game of golf during the early years of Mona's tenure and the caliber of educational programs the association offers as other accomplishments. One recent initiative is that continuing

education is required to maintain Class A superintendent status.

Mona doesn't take the praise for the successes.

"I was in the c.e.o. chair, but I don't take credit for it personally," he says.

One area Mona is proud of is that the recognition golf course superintendents receive today is significantly better than 14 years ago.

"It's not about the institution," he says. "It's all about what we're doing on behalf of the members."

As much as Mona will be missed, it could be beneficial to bring a new perspective to the position, Williams says.

"It allows for opportunities to bring in fresh ideas, fresh blood and fresh energy to the situation," he says, adding he's confident the transition will be smooth so recent initiatives will be continued into the future.

Mona has been involved with the WGF and its initiatives during the past decade, serving on the World Golf Hall of Fame advisory board and The First Tee advisory committee since 1998 and the GOLF 20/20 executive board since 1999.

Two of the WGF's visions are to unite the entire golf industry and encourage the growth of the game while its core values remain intact.

"It's a broad mandate, but it's very interesting to me," Mona says.

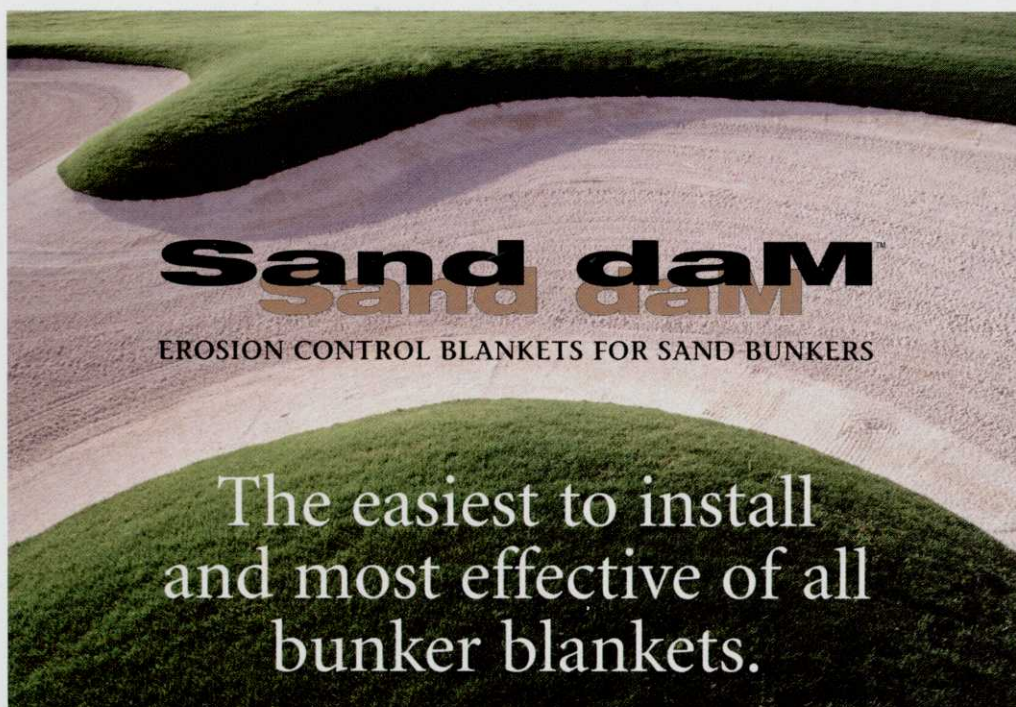
Specifically, Mona will be involved with the antidoping issue, which the WGF will address, as well as with communication and public affairs on a global level, including among the different golf institutions.

"It's a chance for me to work directly with major issues in the game of golf on a global scale," he says. "As a representative of the GCSAA, I'm on a lot of different golf committees, but this is an entirely new role for me."

Many in the industry see Mona's new position and his connection to the GCSAA as an opportunity for increased networking. As GCSAA board member Jim Fitzroy put it, "it will be nice to have a friend in a high place."

Borman works with one of Mona's new responsibilities, The First Tee. While the CGCSA doesn't work with the organization daily, it has a good working relationship with the junior golf groups in the Carolinas.

"Sure, (Mona) will be working with



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associations, but it won't be the day-to-day interaction that he spent his last 14 years doing," Borman says.

The selection process for a new GCSAA c.e.o. started Sept. 28, with the nine-member board making up the selection committee. The board has been participating in conference calls and will meet in the next couple weeks to discuss criteria for the replacement, Heine says. Once the desired qualities for a c.e.o. are hammered out, a search firm will seek candidates.

"There will be a resume-receiving period and then interviews, probably by mid-December," he says. "The goal is to have a replacement chosen before the end of the year, and, in some partial capacity by the Golf Industry Show (which begins Jan. 31)."

This is only an outline of the process, and it's subject to change, he adds.

Nichols says the association is probably in a better position now to pick a replacement than it was 13 years ago, so the process should go more smoothly this time.

Because of the new leadership format, the board had to find a c.f.o. and a c.o.o. at the same time it hired a c.e.o. and didn't use an outside search firm, Williams says.

"The staff now is more qualified than it was 14 years ago," Nichols says. "We're more of a business-oriented organization than we were when Steve came."

Ironically, one thing Mona wishes he had worked on more is a succession plan for the c.e.o. position so a clear path was established for the board to follow.

"It will be a smooth transition," Mona says. "I might not stay on the whole six months because I might not be needed that long."

The replacement could come from inside or outside the organization and might or might not be a golf course superintendent, depending on the qualifications of the candidates.

Even though the decision of a successor is ultimately the GCSAA boards, Mona's own personal view is his successor should be from within the golf industry.

"It's important he or she understands the industry and has a passion for it," he says. "Although I wouldn't exclude someone from outside the industry. The person should be qualified, effective and interested in the industry."

It's a tall order finding a replacement for

Mona, Borman says.

"Finding someone to do the day-to-day administrative duties of the c.e.o. of the GCSAA will be the easy part," he says.

"Finding a replacement of Steve's stature,

given how well thought of he is throughout the entire golf community and the impression he left when he worked with other people, will be the hard thing to find in a replacement." – Heather Wood and John Walsh

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## A collective effort

When drought conditions hit Georgia hard enough to necessitate water restrictions four years ago, many superintendents thought it was unfair they had to follow the same rules as homeowners. Restrictions were loosened slightly so greens and tees could be maintained, but some in the industry weren't comfortable with the direction the regulations were heading. They figured they had to turn the trend around.

"We said we wanted further concessions because we're environmental stewards, and we'll prove it," says Mark Esoda, superintendent at Atlanta Country Club.



Esoda

Since then, a task force has been gathering that proof in the form of more than 200 Georgia golf courses' water usage reports.

"We decided we would be proactive and take initiative to develop best management practices for water conservation," says Richard Staughton, president of the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association and superintendent and manager of Towne Lake Hills Golf Course in Woodstock, Ga. "We wouldn't force our members with a gun to their head, but would say that if we show we're responsible and have a plan to conserve our water, we would be looked upon favorably in a new water plan."

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the GGCSA task force signed a memorandum of agreement in 2004. GGCSA member courses were asked to submit reports logging their water use rates, application methods and other conservation efforts.

"We asked people to provide three steps as to how they might conserve water," Staughton says. "We gave examples of what they could do, like only water the driving range once a week, or instead of mowing 85 acres at 2 inches, find five acres and don't irrigate them at all."

Committee members sent templates to superintendents to complete, hoping for 75-percent participation among association members. Course operators were given three years to return the report. Given the far-away

deadline, many superintendents put the project on the backburner at first, Esoda says. The responses trickled in, until six months before the deadline, when the committee was flooded with them.

The submissions returned exceeded the committee's expectations. About 91 percent of the 230 GGCSA-member courses participated. There are about 400 golf courses in the state.

The reports still are being analyzed, but the water sources and conservation methods vary from course to course.

The committee sent volunteers to golf courses and held classes to try to encourage participation in the program. Superintendents realize water supplies aren't endless, but it wasn't until early summer – when the state experienced some of its driest months on record – that it really hit home, Staughton says.

"Like a lot of things, people say they'll try, but when it gets down to the nitty-gritty and they force restrictions onto you, people take it a little more seriously," he says. "We started the year watering what we wanted."

That's not the case anymore. Drought conditions weren't getting any better in the state in May as the last of the BMP entries were filtering in. Courses were ordered to follow a stage-two, drought-watering restriction, which puts them on the same schedule as residential water users. They can water the fairways three days a week. Tees and greens are exempt.

"It caught people's attention when they told us when we could water," Staughton says.

Staughton doesn't think the regulations are fair because water sources for golf courses are different than for homeowners.

"There's always the perception that golf courses use a lot of water," Staughton says. "We're using water you're not going to use at home, per se. We use nonpotable or pond water. We're not using drinking water."

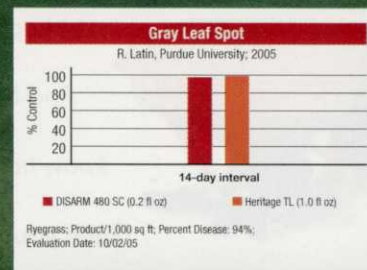
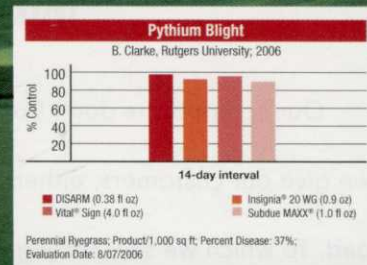
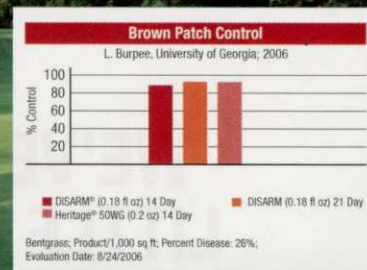
The golf industry is the only industry in the state that's being regulated and the only industry that has signed an agreement with the Georgia EPD, Esoda says. Esoda and Staughton hope they can work out water-usage rules that meet each course's unique needs yet keep conservation in mind.

"It's been positive getting regulators to listen to us," Esoda says. "It will help when we go to the review table for water rules." – HW

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