



## THE MARK OF A TRUE PROFESSIONAL

I'm not sure if Golf Course Industry knows what they're getting into by giving me this column. For those of you that know me, I'm very opinionated, and it's usually not until you meet me for the third or fourth time that you come to accept or maybe even like that about me. In this and future columns, I plan to share with you my own thoughts on a range of topics from research to education to social media and other technology.

As I sit here trying to come up with the magical prose that will have everyone hooked on reading future articles, the only thing I can think about is "How do you write the words needed to describe a necessary moment of silence?"

You see, as a former student, a current faculty member and lifelong alum of Penn State, I am mourning the loss of arguably the greatest college football coach and mentor of all time. This morning (at the time I was writing this), Joe Paterno lost his battle with cancer. Looking back at his life from his first win to his 409th, it's incredible how things have changed during this period.

Thinking of the last hours of JoePa's life and the flurry of blog reports, tweets, misinformation and retractions spewing across cyberspace, I can't help to think how the world of communication has changed.

Most of you know that I am a huge fan of social media and think it has positively changed the way we communicate. The premature reporting of JoePa's death, however, was a prime example of the good and the bad that comes along with the inherent rapid-fire sharing of information. In the past, we would have waited for the morning newspapers or the evening news to provide us with the facts. In 2012, we simply turn to Twitter where we get the play-by-play coverage.

And while the "credible" news organizations race to be the first to report breaking news (and in the case of Joe Paterno's death, jumped the gun), it was JoePa's two sons that let us know that "Joe is continuing to fight." That's right, a tweet by @JayPaterno and @ScottPaterno, presumably from their dad's bedside in the hospital, corrected erroneous reports of his death by CBS and others earlier in the evening. Those words were like music to the ears of every Penn State supporter and college football fan, if only for a few hours.

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the main reason that working 80-plus hours per week has never felt like work for me.

The fact remains that the current economy continues to make it more difficult for academics to grow their programs. Competitive research funding within turf has either never existed or has diminished in recent years. If it wasn't for the continued support from a few associations and the private industry, many programs would (and still may) dry up completely.

So is the future of the turfgrass industry all doom and gloom and sporadic bits of useless information transmitted via social media? I would say absolutely not. We still need to

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(who never had an email account) started Skyping with potential recruits towards the end of his career.

Now, just hours after JoePa's actual passing, I reminisce not only about the past but also about what the future has in store. Our industry has seen its fair share of downturn in the past decade. The days of booming construction, an abundance of jobs across all levels and longevity in a single position are long gone.

While I have come to accept the transient nature of the golf course maintenance industry, recent departures of prominent faculty from prestigious institutions have raised many questions about the state of academia as well.

Before anyone reads too much into this, I am very fortunate to hold a position that I love and think of more as a passion than a job. This is probably

adapt, however, to the fact that it's not always about everyone having everything.

Life is not always fair. To advance in this economy, we will all have to work harder to make ourselves, our company, our golf club or even our university stand out.

Getting to the top is going to be competitive for the younger generation, and holding onto a job may prove challenging for others. In looking at the big picture though, this competition will be the driving force behind the advancement not only of individuals, but also the industry as a whole.

"You have to perform at a consistently higher level than others. That's the mark of a true professional." — Joseph Vincent Paterno (December 21, 1926-January 22, 2012) **GCI**