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THE GOOD OF 2020

Notice the four-letter word in the headline. G-o-o-d. There, we wrote it. Twice already. Much of what we heard and read this year ranged from nasty to nauseous. Lives were lost, jobs became vulnerable and main-street businesses shuttered. None of it seemed imaginable last December. Now, we're in *this* December. *This* year will become *last* year in a few weeks.

Golf escaped many of the hardships pestering other industries reliant on discretionary income. Mass acreage can be tricky and costly to maintain, but it allows for spacing and safety, a pair of qualities with immeasurable societal value.

Following a spring sucker punch, which included a period in early April when more courses were closed than opened, the industry experienced quantifiable and anecdotal good in the back nine of 2020. Rounds played nationally through September were up 8.7 percent compared to the same period in 2019, according to GolfDatatech. Golf entered a good place as spring turned to summer, especially when you consider thousands of sports venues, restaurants and movie theaters are still not operating at capacity.

The stories match the numbers. For the fifth straight year, we opened our December issue to reader-submitted content. We begin pondering Turfheads Take Over in August, yet we scrap detailed advance planning because we don't know where the issue might head until receiving submissions in late October and early November. One of these years we'll have our creative and adaptable art director Jim Blayney concoct a December cover with the headline: *Turfheads Take Over: The most random magazine you'll ever read!!!*

We received articles about self-awakening (Tyler Bloom), assistant superintendent life (Richard Brown), asset management (Nelson Caron), retirement (Sandy Clark), mentorship (Brent Downs), returning to the industry (Charlie Fultz), authentic experiences (Tim Gerrish), branding (Randy Hoffacker), gratitude (Jason Hollen), managing aging turf (Scott Krout), personal innovation (Gina Rizzi), course enhancement guidance (Kelly Shumate) and hands-on learning (Ashley Wilkinson). The randomness, in this case, contrasted what we were expecting.

I'll be the first to admit, I thought we'd be seeing a few dour stories in our inboxes about small-staffs, less personal interaction and pressure to use the golf course as a means to overcome lost clubhouse revenue. But the next 40 pages provide more optimism and inspiration than pessimism.

Bloom started a new business in the middle of the pandemic and Clark retired earlier than expected. Neither is ending this year fearful about their 2021 prospects. Bloom will engage with new clients; Clark will travel to enjoy experiences he often skipped during a 50-year turf career.

The pandemic actually created an opportunity for Fultz to reenter an industry he loves. Downs found the time to safely visit a pair of friends who helped shape his career. Wilkinson and the turf team at Horry Georgetown Technical College saw their dream of an outdoor classroom capable of hosting closest-to-the-pin contests become a reality.

The Arizona grass Krout and his team maintain became a year older in 2020 and courses of all ages continued pursuing the infrastructure and architectural enhancements Shumate relishes studying. Owners, boards and general managers enthralled by indoor spaces finally realized that the course represents the central asset at a golf facility, a fact-based argument Caron has been making for years.

Business remains robust thanks to the central asset and its determined protectors. Rounds played nationally surpassed 2019 totals in May, June, July, August, September and October. When the numbers are crunched, November and December will likely enter that list. We've all heard a superintendent or two recently grumble about the course receiving too much business in 2020. Don't think less rest for the course beats the alternative? Spend a few minutes in an empty ballpark, restaurant or hotel.

A few days, weeks and months of demand exceeding supply creates hassles. A few days, weeks and months without customers creates heartache.

Compared to other industries, golf will exit 2020 in good shape. **GCI**



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OPERATION DOUBLE EAGLE TEES OFF

Located just miles from the Masters, an ambitious new program focuses on preparing injured veterans for golf course maintenance careers.

By Matt LaWell

Jeremy Tindell was 25 years old and five years into his military career when he jumped out of an airplane over South Africa, tangled with another soldier and plunged toward the ground. Tindell survived and continued to serve in the 75th Ranger Regiment, an elite force in the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, but he had fractured his lower back. He slid from a position with the infantry over to the staff. He worked behind a desk for most of the next 15 years.

"It kind of slowed my promotion and progression," Tindell says. "They kept me within the unit and helped me to rehabilitate the best that I could."

Tindell eventually transitioned to become a career counselor within the unit. He retired in 2018, Sergeant First Class, with two full decades of service. He served his last three years at Fort Gordon—the current home of the Army Signal Corps, the Army Cyber Corps and the Cyber Cen-

ter of Excellence—in Augusta, Georgia.

Augusta, of course, is a fine place for a young man who loves golf and Tindell dived into the game even before he retired. Some days, he can play 18 holes. Other days, because of lingering injuries related to that tangled jump, he might be able play three or four. Before this year, he had worked security each of the last five Masters at Augusta National Golf Club, sitting in what he calls "the catbird seat" near the practice green and the first tee.

"I meet probably tens of thousands of people," he says. "I love meeting people. I love conversations, just being personable."

And that personability, that love of the game, that military drive for perfection to help his fellow servicemen and women, all blended together, helped make Tindell the perfect candidate for the position he holds in retirement: veteran outreach coordinator for The Warrior Alliance's Operation Double Eagle.

Launched in 2018, The Warrior Alliance

is one of about 43,000 veteran service non-profit organizations. Its stated mission is to help veterans, or Warriors, and their families achieve a fulfilling civilian life by promoting collaboration between the organizations that can support them during the transition from military service.

Operation Double Eagle is just part of the organization but could become an incredibly valuable resource for the golf course maintenance industry: If the program develops like Tindell and Scott Johnson, the president and executive director of The Warrior Alliance, forecast, it will produce a cohort of as many as 15 injured veterans, trained in every aspect of the industry by a veteran college turfgrass program instructor, every nine weeks.

Conducted at Augusta Technical College and led by Scott Smith, the 14 credit hour-program dives into turfgrass and golf course management, irrigation and pipe installation, pest management and pesticide application, water management, hor-

ticulture science, equipment safety, planting and legal — along with daily lab visits to the Double Eagle Performance Center and regular trips to Augusta Municipal Golf Club, a David Ogilvie design affectionately referred to as The Patch. Among the many projects for Operation Double Eagle Warriors: a renovation to bring The Patch up to code with current Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Completion will merit a Golf Turf and Landscape Specialist certificate. They will be prepared not for jobs but for careers.

“We’re lining up the employers on the back end,” Johnson says. “So it’s not like, ‘Finish this work, guys and gals, and then good luck to you. Here’s how you write your resume.’ We’re bringing the employers to them.” Landscapes Unlimited, Wadsworth Golf Construction and East Lake Golf Club have already expressed interest in cohort graduates.

“My long-term vision is not that we’re going to be able to build 500 people through this program every year,” Johnson says. “That’s not my goal. It’s to drive a 98 percent employment rate for everybody that comes through the program and we’ve become the pool of resources for the industry. ... We can become a kind of constant workforce development program and even tailor some things for certain parts of the industry, like irrigation.”

For now, Operation Double Eagle will be limited geographically to Augusta, though Johnson and the rest of the team think it could scale up with more locations, more cohorts, more Warriors. “Our biggest challenge is getting the word out

in the industry and finding organizations that are not just veteran-friendly but are committed,” he says.

A few big names might help that challenge become less of a hurdle. Bernie Marcus, the co-founder and longtime CEO of The Home Depot, helped Johnson build The Warrior Alliance from the ground up. Veteran Augusta University director of athletics Clint Bryant is a member of the board. The biggest name for industry professionals, though, is Marsh Benson, the senior director of golf course and grounds at Augusta National from 1990 until his retirement in 2015.

“There are a lot of programs trying to provide veterans job opportunities,” says Benson, who serves as a strategic advisor for Johnson. “But oftentimes those job duties that come their way, I don’t think, respect the leadership skills that they’ve learned in the military.” The emphasis on careers rather than jobs attracted Benson, who never served in the military but whose family served in various branches back to the Civil War. Benson’s father, William Frank Benson, served in the 8th Air Force, and his uncle, Herbert R. Edmondson, was an Army Colonel in the Pacific.

Benson has no interest in “sitting on some board somewhere.” He wants to help make a difference. “Coming out of this program will definitely provide a head start,” he says, “and I really feel that in our industry, there truly are lots of opportunities or positions that can be careers. And I think there are facets of the business that also allow for somebody who gets experience like this to be an entrepreneur and start their own company — in irrigation, or software management, or heavy equipment operation, or you take care of an estate, you have a lawn care company.”

No matter where cohort graduates wind up — the pilot program of five is still finding their professional footing, and the first full cohort will wrap up its nine weeks of instruction and training this month — Tindell will keep in touch.

“We’re bringing a new hybrid of employees to the golf course industry when it comes to maintenance and management,” Tindell says. “And I’m dedicated to these guys and gals.”



Tartan Talks No. 53

When we’re looking to try something new on the Tartan Talks podcast, we know we can rely on **Jason Straka** and **Kent Turner** to enthusiastically participate.

Straka, a principal at Fry Straka Global Golf Design, and Turner, the director of grounds and golf course operations at Kenwood Country Club, combined for our first architect-superintendent episode last year to discuss the early stages of the renovation on the Cincinnati-area club’s Kendale Course. The project ended this summer, with nine holes reopening in June and the other nine opening in August. Pictures of the transformation sent to us from Straka sparked an idea: record a podcast with the duo about what they accomplished and learned in the past year. Consider it our first before-and-after podcast.

Plenty has changed since our visit to Kenwood in November 2019. But Straka’s and Turner’s zest for the renovation and their respective jobs has remained unyielding.

Enter bitly.com/StrakaTurner into your web browser to hear the podcast. Episodes can also be found on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify and other popular podcast distribution platforms.



GSA goes virtual

Bayer, John Deere receive favorable reviews for virtual Green Start Academy.

In March, when the COVID-19 pandemic was just starting to shutter shows, games and events that filled everyday lives, Bert Schmidt reached out to Mike Hirvela and the rest of the folks who had helped produce Green Start Academy — the annual program designed for the professional development of assistant superintendents and sponsored jointly by Bayer and John Deere — for the last decade and a half.

Schmidt is the global manager for market development and strategy for John Deere Golf; Hirvela is the Bayer CropScience Turf & Ornamental customer marketing manager. Along with other dedicated folks, they are responsible for turning Green Start Academy from idea to event. And like so many people in charge of events this year, the pandemic tossed so many knots in their plans.

“If we can’t hold Green Start Academy in person,” Schmidt recalls saying, “we might as well cancel it.”

Thank goodness, Schmidt says, not everybody listened to his suggestion.

“This program is too important,” Schmidt remembers Carlos Arraya, the assistant general manager at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis and a Green Start Academy mentor, replying. “I don’t think we should cancel it. We should think creatively and try to do it virtually.”

And after a couple more rounds of emails and calls — and more than seven months of planning — that is exactly what happened.

Bayer and John Deere welcomed about 50 assistant superintendents — and about 100 program alums — to a unique Green Start Academy, conducted not over a couple days in North Carolina but over a month of Wednesday afternoons on Zoom. The sessions featured professional keynoteer Jeff Havens, human resources professional Carol Rau, and Arraya

dishing out advice that should help assistants transition from grass growers to real leaders.

The event also included a series of virtual breakout sessions with industry leaders — Arraya, Bob Farren of Pinehurst Resort, Lukus Harvey of Atlanta Athletic Club, Dan Meersman of Philadelphia Cricket Club, Grant Murphy of Barrie Country Club and PJ Salter of Riviera Country Club — that provided another opportunity for assistants to develop leadership tendencies, build professional networks and think about what they need to do to land where they want to be.

“I had never been on a Zoom call until my first Green Start Academy session, and I was skeptical I wasn’t going to take as much away, I wouldn’t be as engaged,” says Will Laine, assistant superintendent at Daniel Island Club, a 36-hole facility in Charleston, South Carolina. “I was skeptical I wouldn’t have the same experience others have before, but I couldn’t imagine going to an in-person event now, I got so much out of the virtual event.”

“I almost wanted to back out at the last second, but I’m glad I didn’t. The little time it took out of my afternoons was worth it. Being able to set time aside one day a week, it was something I looked forward to. I prepped for it almost like I would prep for an exam.”

Laine attended breakout sessions with Salter, a rookie Green Start Academy mentor who followed up with recap emails and packed his Tuesday breakouts with even more guest presenters. (Salter scheduled time with longtime USGA Green Section officials Steve Kammerer and Todd Lowe, who moved to Bayer in 2018; his own mentor, Eric von Hofen of The Club at Weston Hills; Ralph Dain of the GCSAA; and resume wizard Erin Wolfram of Career



Advantage.) Salter calls the sessions “a labor of love.”

“Who could I bring in from my network who’s helped me along the way and could help drive home each week’s points?” Salter says. “This stuff that they’ve taught the guys is golden. It’s right at the top of the list of things I wish I had learned in college.”

Marty Paget also attended breakout sessions with Salter. He worked as a superintendent at four smaller clubs in Kansas and Missouri during his 20s and 30s. Now 44, he’s an assistant superintendent at The National Golf Club of Kansas City in Parkville, Missouri. Spurred on by what he learned during the program, he says he plans to apply for first assistant positions at clubs with a national profile or a superintendent position at an 18-hole course larger than where he worked when he was younger — while still becoming more of a leader at The National.

“Sometimes you have to be a boss, not just a friend,” Paget says. “But it’s nice to interact with your team beyond just work.”

Like the rest of the 2020 attendees, Paget and Laine will have the option to attend a future Green Start Academy in person — and there will be future in-person events, along with an expanded slate of complementary virtual events open to all alums, according to Schmidt and Hirvela — and both expressed interest in cashing in on that opportunity.

The virtual event was fantastic, after all, but, as Laine says, “I would like to meet all these people in person eventually.”

— Matt LaWell

Course news

Rees Jones returned to **Coral Ridge Country Club** in Fort Lauderdale, Florida — a course designed by his father, Robert Trent Jones Sr. that will reopen this month following a project that included new greens, updated irrigation and improved drainage. The same design, playability and challenge will remain as a tribute to Jones Sr., whose vision was carved into the community.



Coral Creek Club in Placida, Florida, completed a renovation spearheaded by original designer Tom Fazio. The project included updating the playing surfaces with new modern Bermudagrasses to allow for faster greens speeds and more consistency, the updating of bunker positions and sand, improved tee locations, the expansion of the practice facilities, and the addition of new drainage to provide firmer and faster playability conditions.

Robert McNeil guided Donald Ross-designed **Kernwood Country Club** in Salem, Massachusetts, through a project that included construction of 44 new bunkers, removal of others and the reshaping of several more into grassy catchment areas and pitch areas.

Blythefield Country Club in Belmont, Michigan, host of the Meijer LPGA Classic, is completing the final stage of a major renovation and revitalization of its 18-hole golf course and club grounds. Chris Wilczynski developed improvement plans and has overseen the renovation.

AS THE SUN SETS ON 2020

We want to take a moment to extend our thanks to superintendents for pulling through this tumultuous year in order to keep golf alive.

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WHAT'S NEXT RESTS IN YOUR HANDS

Every superintendent's hands tell a story. Tough as worn boot leather, marked with the scars of the trade, a superintendent's hands are testament to long days and honest work that never seems to end. Their hands groom and maintain the course and grounds that are an owner's most valuable asset while holding the employment and income stability for their crews.

By all accounts, a superintendent's hands shape the future. That's as true with the things that are visible — tee boxes, fairways and greens — as those that are not, namely the meticulous plans that support every aspect of an agronomic program. How do the best superintendents plan for the future? They start with three basics:

1. AN OVERALL PLAN FOR THEIR WORK. The overall plan for the care and upkeep of your course establishes the standards of excellence by which you should be measured. The agronomic plan describes your cultural practices for the basics and should include detailed descriptions of fertility, irrigation, labor, arboreal and the sub-plans that support each of those major pillars.

Plan so that you can make your agronomic plan an educational and informational guide that uses photographs and narrated video to keep your owner, board and greens committee well-informed. In addition to setting standards, your agronomic plan is a great opportunity for you to teach key stakeholders what they should expect of you and your team.

2. A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN. Once your agronomic plan — together with its supporting details and sub-plans

— is established and approved, it's time to implement your communications plan. Target all stakeholders — your team, the rest of the management staff and your golfers — to help everyone understand your plan of action. This is not a time to seek permission. This is the time to demonstrate your knowledge, experience and expertise.

Set a schedule for your messaging and meet it. Use multiple media to deliver the message — video, brief written descriptions and small-group field days, when you take members onto the course to demonstrate how your programs are being executed.

Some superintendents become victim to overpromising details and conditions that cannot be delivered. Be alert and carefully describe what you will accomplish. By the same token, do not understate the value of your efforts. This is no game for sandbaggers. Demonstrate your professionalism and capabilities with clear-cut descriptions of who you are, what your team goals are and how the goals will be successfully achieved. Show what features you will emphasize on the course and explain the benefits of each element of your strategy.

3. A SELF-IMPROVEMENT PLAN. GCSAA provides countless opportunities for superintendents to stay current on science and technology and to learn about new trends. The most respected and rewarded superintendents also seek out opportunities — and a regimen

— for self-improvement. Here are a handful of keys for improving your own capabilities:

- Read more. Leaders in every field are readers who continually gather more information that bolsters insight and wisdom.
- Get fit. The pressures that come with the job and the common inclination to treat oneself well when one feels overlooked or unappreciated combine to add weight, cholesterol and risk to your well-being. Get in shape and stay there.
- Identify and address blind spots. What do you overlook or consider to be inconsequential? Which people or circumstances trigger frustrations during your day? The better you identify threats to your overall view of your world, the better you will navigate unexpected events.
- Live with BHAGS. Set big, hairy, audacious goals for yourself and your crew. The bigger your dreams, the more fun it is when you make them real.
- Avoid negative people. Their attitudes can be contagious and poison morale. Build your network around positive people who inspire you and bring out innovative thinking and your best work.

Superintendents hold in their hands the franchise value of their course. Describe your plan to make it even better. Communicate your plans clearly and honestly. And never stop making yourself an even more valuable professional. **GCI**



HENRY DELOZIER is a partner at GGA Partners, trusted advisors and thought leaders. He is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon International.

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THE 2020 GRAINY AWARDS

So much for a quiet year! With COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns, quarantines, and social distancing, you might have thought things were going to be slow and dull. Wrong! The Grainy selection committee was surprisingly busy, working into the wee hours counting those ballots — legal and otherwise! And with that, may we introduce the winners from 2020, the year that can't end soon enough.

BEST (AS IN WORST) COSTUME DESIGN

"I haven't met an endorsement deal I won't take" Phil Mickelson has been sporting some odd-looking sunglasses. He looks like *South Park*'s Eric Cartman ("Respect my authority!"). The next deal? May be a big-wheel tricycle.

NON-FEATURE/INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

Rather than be creative and figure out how to stage The Open Championship, the R&A chose instead to take Lloyd's of London's insurance money. We all will have to wait for "the champion golfer of the year" to take center stage.

NOT-SO-SHORT SUBJECT

"The Long Goodbye of Mike Davis." Ad nauseum. Hopefully we won't be watching his U.S. Oops reruns into the next decade now that he is pursuing his lifelong passion of golf course architecture.

RICHARD BURTON HONORARY SNUB



TIM MORAGHAN, principal, ASPIRE Golf (tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com). Follow Tim's blog, Golf Course Confidential at www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html or on Twitter @TimMoraghan

Amazingly, Burton was seven times an Oscar nominee but never a winner. Amazingly, there is not a golf course superintendent in the World Golf Hall of Fame. No, Old Tom Morris doesn't count. Someone might want to remind the selection committee that the game is played on grass, which someone (ahem) has to grow and maintain.

HUMANITARIAN AWARD

ClubsHelp. Born out of need during the early days of the pandemic, ClubsHelp gives golf clubs a good name by pairing them with local hospitals, frontline workers and emergency service personnel. Clubs and their members really stepped up, providing PPE, energy snacks, drinks and more. Every club should be a member: It's free and does more than any program I know of to connect clubs to their communities. www.clubshelp.org

BEST (SIDE) EFFECTS

One unintended outcome of the pandemic was a return to walking the golf course. And the hot accessory became the hand cart (push cart, pull cart, trolley, call it whatever you want). To which the committee can only say, "About time!"

BEST LIVE ACTION FILM

The Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association's turf conference went from virtual to viral: 40 associations, more than 550 registrants and 30 classes over 30 days. Kudos to executive director Tim Kreger and

his board for opening their conference to the entire country. Moral: When there's a problem, superintendents find a way.

BEST SOUND

The lack of it. By limiting or eliminating fans at PGA Tour events, we were spared the inane "you the mans," "in the holes" and "Baba Booeys." So, it's true: Every cloud does have a silver lining.

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Toptracer. Who knew a thin blue trace could change the trajectory of a centuries-old sport? Time-tested and Tour-approved, Toptracer has transformed how we watch golf on TV, how we practice golf at the driving range and the business of golf itself. And it's good on the eyes, too!

BEST MAKE-UP AND STYLING

To the three superintendents who juggled schedules, seasons and seeding to pull off three major championships and de-



liver three exemplary champions. I'm sure we won't be giving their trophies to anyone else any time soon. Hats off — and thank you — to Kevin Teahan (TPC Harding Park), Steve Rabideau (Winged Foot Golf Club) and Brad Owen (Augusta National Golf Club).

BEST ACTOR(S)

Every superintendent in America. With the game exploding — but often unable to find labor, machinery, or supplies — superintendents and the rest of every club's staff did outstanding work. Of course, all those extra golfers meant more complaints about maintenance, which just goes to show that not everything in 2020 was abnormal.

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

He's original, all right. Love him or hate him (and how can you hate him?), Bryson DeChambeau pushed the envelope and gave the golf world something new to talk about. True, his prodigious length might cause some serious head-scratching. Tiger-proofing did not work; how about Bryson-braking? At least he won't be complaining about hitting out of anyone else's divots. Watch for the USGA to try legislating the number of reps allowed in the gym.

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Augusta National and the Masters made the best they could of the November dates and "adapted" the look and level of conditioning to stage this revered major. Shame on anyone who criticized the slower greens, immature overseed and damp turf. Not only did we get to see a really good event, we got a look at America's golf cathedral in a



different season. Personally, I thought it was superb. Speaking of the Masters, a nice move — if long overdue — naming Lee Elder an honorary starter. April 2021 can't come soon enough.

THE "WAIT, DIDN'T I SEE THIS MOVIE ALREADY" AWARD

Shortly after the article "Women in Golf: Beyond the Ladies Tees" ran in this magazine, golf's other media outlets suddenly got "woke" and discovered that women aren't only on the LPGA Tour or the beverage cart. Our profession needs more original thinkers — and women — not more copycats.

PICTURE OF THE YEAR

The Game of Golf. When the pandemic began, no one would have predicted golf would emerge as a savior — at all levels. From the PGA Tour restarting in June to the widespread embracing of the game by millions of current and new golfers, this social-distancing-approved activity experienced the boom it had been waiting for. So thanks to golf for helping us get outdoors, giving us enjoyment (well,



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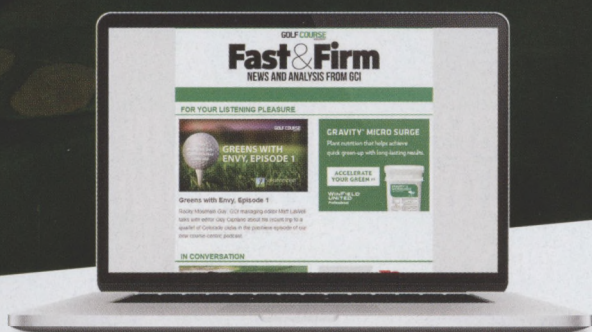
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OUTSIDE THE ROPES



mostly enjoyment; it isn't as if COVID-19 was a cure for our slice), letting us hang with our friends (cautiously), and giving parents somewhere to take or send their kids. Now, of course, everyone in the industry should be working on ways to keep the ball rolling.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Pete Dye. Pete did for course architecture what your crazy Uncle Larry does every time he says "pull my finger." He shook things up, defied convention and made some of us scowl but most

of us laugh. Pete's genius will be rediscovered and appreciated every time a golfer tees it up on one of his courses. He will be missed. R.I.P.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Tom Watschke, professor emeritus of turfgrass science, Penn State University, who helped us all.

Doug Sanders, who brought color to a black-and-white world

Mickey Wright, a quiet talent and the personification of class **GCI**



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A Beautiful Thing



FMC Tees Up Launch of Kalida™ Fungicide and Renews Commitment to GCSAA Give Back Program

FMC's commitment to the golf industry is here to stay. With the fast approach of 2021, FMC is pleased to reaffirm our commitment to bringing innovation and support to the golf industry. At the upcoming Golf Industry Show, FMC's newest technology, Kalida™ Fungicide, will be unveiled – providing you with a reliable solution to help improve the way you care for your course – along with a renewed Give Back commitment from FMC to local chapters of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).



With the addition of Kalida Fungicide, FMC now offers a portfolio and

programs to match the growing needs of the marketplace. On its own, Kalida is innovative – it combines two proprietary active ingredients into a powerful duo – and also works perfectly within a program. With proven turf safety and dual modes of action, Kalida Fungicide can tackle *Large Patch*, *Take-All Root Rot*, *Bipolaris Leaf Spot*, *Anthracnose* and other labeled diseases in a variety of warm- and cool-season turfgrasses. In addition, FMC Professional Solutions will be launching new, novel products every year over the next four years.

“We have some exciting new additions planned for 2021 – including our new Kalida Fungicide, unique value-added content and exclusive trial offers to FMC True Champions members,” said Evan Parenti, FMC Golf & Lawn Care Marketing Manager. “We know that 2020's challenges will persist into 2021, but so does our commitment to the industry. We believe golf is naturally positioned to be even more crucial for people's ‘pandemic relief’ in 2021, and we are here to support the industry in every way we can.”

To date, FMC has delivered approximately \$30,000 to nearly 90 local GCSAA chapters nationwide – \$21,000 resulting from your participation following the launch of Rayora™ Fungicide and the GCSAA Give Back program at the 2020 Golf Industry Show, and an additional \$9,000 resulting from recent participation in the Rayora and Fame® SC Seasonal component of the program.

This donation is part of the commitment FMC has pledged to the golf industry through support of the local GCSAA chapters. The Give Back donations reflect the success of new, innovative products like Rayora Fungicide, a ‘next generation’ DMI fungicide.

“As a committed partner, it is important for us to support the golf industry and those who are helping it progress each day,” said Mike Sisti, FMC Marketing Manager. “Since many fundraisers and outings were cancelled this year due to COVID, our support is especially important. We continue to be amazed at the passion and resilience of the golf industry.”

FMC True Champions

The FMC Give Back program is an initiative driven by the FMC True Champions program that was launched in fall 2019. The FMC True Champions program is a source for golf course superintendents and managers to access valuable Product Rewards and Product Assurances. It also has a third pillar that supports industry initiatives and associations like GCSAA, We Are Golf, and RISE. This depth of industry commitment by FMC includes increased investments in these causes. To support those efforts, annual contributions are set aside based on annual purchases.

With the launch of the new Kalida Fungicide product and a new year comes a new GCSAA Give Back Program, as well as other exciting golf-specific additions to FMC's True Champions program.

The FMC True Champions program also features a section focused on Business Building Solutions content for golf course superintendents. This content will not only include Product Assurances, but also content to help superintendents and their assistants grow their soft-skills, including perspectives from their peers on topics like understanding how to embrace new technology on their course to managing and motivating a staff. It's all about supporting the golf market on multiple levels: investing in the research to bring innovative solutions to the market, understanding the business of golf with an attractive, easy to follow rebate program, and supporting the “true champions” of golf, the superintendents who manage their course, staff and members every single day of the year.





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TURFHEADS I HAVE LEARNED FROM

I've been writing about golf for 40 years, almost all of it about golf courses and much of that involving maintenance. Through thousands of articles, nine books and hundreds of talks and PowerPoint presentations, I have learned a lot from the folks who spend their days (and nights) on the agronomic side of things.

My first awareness of superintendents came in 1968, as a 14-year-old caddie at the Woodmere Club on Long Island. That's when I noticed the work that greenkeeper John Traynor and his mainly Italian crew of laborers were doing getting the course readied each day. As an early bird, I often arrived on weekends at dawn and got to see the choreography of labor that whipped the place into shape each morning. On Mondays, we were allowed to play the course, which gave me a greater appreciation of the more invasive work required to keep things going.

By my fourth year at Woodmere, I graduated to cart manager, collecting a weekly paycheck from Textron and engaging in the morning setup ritual of bringing up the carts from the charging station. There I shared quarters with Traynor and his crew, and was always careful to yield to their movements, whether in crossing a road or traveling down the narrow path between the tennis courts and the clubhouse.

I remember Traynor as very old school – gruff, hard-edged, not very communicative with the membership. I knew nothing of what he really knew about his job and he showed no interest in mine. I just knew that he spent a lot of time out there, and when he went on to take over maintenance at Westchester Country Club, I figured that was confirmation of his status in the industry.

I started writing about golf architecture a decade later. My first article, a study of strategic design for the Canadian magazine *SCORE*, involved a comparison of the all-or-nothing par-3 17th hole at TPC Sawgrass with a wonderfully complex hole of the same length at The Orchards in South Hadley, Massachusetts, that Donald Ross designed. It was there I first met a superintendent with whom I could walk and talk endlessly out on the grounds. Paul Jamrog proved to be a fount of information, and it was through him that I first appreciated what a difference a crack superintendent could make on taking an underfunded facility as far as it could go – and further. I “repaid” my debt to him in 1987 by arranging a surreptitious visit to the course by Ben Crenshaw, who was then playing in the nearby PGA Tour's Canon Sammy Davis Jr.-Greater Hartford Open. When it became evident that the club's resources only stretched so far, I helped Jamrog find his next job as superintendent at Metacomet Country Club in Rhode Island, where he remained for about two decades.

By then I was founding editor of a new biweekly magazine *Superintendent News*. We were desperate for editorial content. Among our freelance columnists was Frank Rossi, an energetic young turf professor from Cornell University. To this day, I have never met anyone so intense, so knowledgeable and so at ease in a lighthearted way conveying his knowing of agronomic science.

There have been so many in-

spiring people who have taught me how to translate technical turfgrass talk into an everyday idiom. Tom Bastis, formerly of California Golf Club of San Francisco and now a PGA Tour agronomist, was the first superintendent I saw take control of a members' meeting and set the folks straight on what they needed to know about their forthcoming restoration. Chris Tritibaugh, whom I met at Northland Country Club in Duluth and have since visited at Hazeltine National outside Minneapolis, taught me the value of making constructive relations with his crew central to everyday operations.

Back home at the municipal course I helped create and now serve on the town's golf committee, Wintonbury Golf Club's Mark Mansur with Indigo Golf Partners (formerly Billy Casper Golf) has remained a model of how to do more with limited resources without sacrificing conditions. Over at Kennett Square Golf & Country Club south of Philadelphia, I've worked for 15 years with superintendent Paul Stead, constantly amazed how he finds ways to improve the property and make golf more enjoyable for the membership.

I could write a book about the superintendents I have met who have inspired me. Maybe someday I will. For now, I will simply say I know of no other business where nominal competitors work so collegially with each other and where they work so patiently with laymen like myself. To all those of you whom I have left out (for now), thank you. **GCI**



BRADLEY S. KLEIN, PH.D. (political science), former PGA Tour caddie, is a veteran golf journalist, book author (“*Discovering Donald Ross*,” among others) and golf course consultant. Follow him on Twitter (@BradleySKlein).



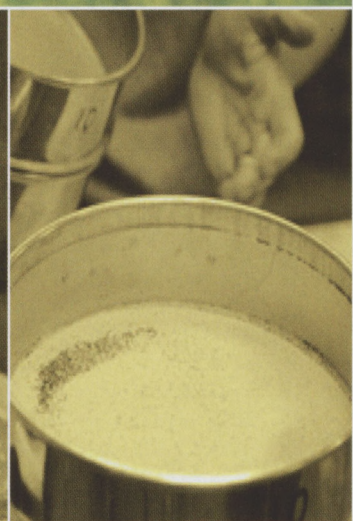
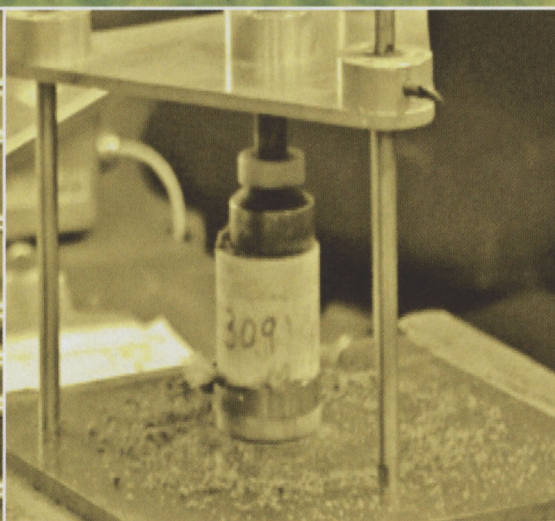
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TURFHEADS TAKE OVER
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A TurPh.Dudes Take On Industry Innovation

This year has definitely been one for the record books. Our industry, our country, and the entire world went through one unforeseeable situation after another. Weird became normal, and change became routine, but the one thing that never wavered was the turfhead's determination to adjust, adapt, and innovate. Innovation really is what makes this industry unique, and it's at the heart of what drives us as a company. That's why we're constantly asking ourselves, "What's next?" and, "How can we make this better?" Because at the end of the day, if our growing solutions aren't keeping up with the ever-evolving needs of the industry, then our mission to maximize our customer's success will slip. So, to ensure that never happens, we've always put product research & development at the forefront of our process. We conduct field trials and research with universities throughout the country, and we have two turf Ph.D's on staff—affectionately known as our TurPh.Dudes. Our success depends on your success, so we want to do everything that we can to make sure you come out on top. To give you a glimpse into why we care so much about providing turfheads with the perfect product, we picked the brilliant brain of one of our TurPh.Dudes, Dr. Jeff Atkinson, to explore why R&D and continued innovation is so important to the industry.

WHERE DO THE TURPH.DUDES FIT INTO THE PRODUCT PROCESS AT HARRELL'S?

My role with Harrell's, as it relates to product development and research, is stewarding product concepts from initial research—or initial idea—to field research, and ultimately to market launch. Our objective as a company is to set our customers up for as much success as possible. So, taking an idea, putting it through the research and development process, and then ultimately providing it to our customers and seeing our customers have success is a very rewarding part of my role.

LET'S TALK MORE ABOUT THAT FIELD RESEARCH.

Field trials are very important to developing products for Harrell's and for our customers. When we launch a product into the market, our objective is to give the customer as much information about the product (and the ways that they can best use the product) to help them be as successful as possible. But often times, when we do launch a product, customers use them in ways that we never envisioned. So, we bring that information and those ideas to universities and try to put data behind those innovations so that our customers can more efficiently use those products and continue to innovate.

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF BEING INVOLVED IN THAT PROCESS?

My favorite part about being involved in that process is seeing an idea become realized into a tool that our customers can use to be more successful. So, maybe that idea comes from a customer, or maybe that idea comes from one of our team members in the field. But, to see that through its development process from the university level, and then to the customer level, and then ultimately to our customer's success is the most satisfying part of that process.

WHY ARE TRIALS AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT SO IMPORTANT?

Our industry relies on research and development because it's a testing ground and vetting process for products before they reach the customers. Our customers have enough to worry about beyond the products working like they should or meeting the claims that are made about the products. That's why we'll always prioritize trials and product development. We want our customers to have the utmost confidence in our products, so we make sure to put them through the paces before they ever reach the shelves of our customers. It just gives them one less thing to worry about.

WHAT'S NEW RIGHT NOW AT HARRELL'S? ANYTHING FRESH OUT OF THE R&D PIPES?

Harrell's has new three product offerings for this year. We have Seaweed A+E, which is a proprietary, unique formulation of *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Ecklonia maxima*. We have EarthMAX® Organic, which is the same EarthMAX® product that our customers have grown to love but now has an OMRI certification. In addition, it also has a 22% carbon claim on the label. And third, we have Activator+SA. We wanted to find a way to incorporate a plant health component into our standard Activator adjuvant, and we've done that by incorporating Salicylic Acid into our Activator formulation.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO CONTINUE WORKING ON PRODUCT INNOVATIONS LIKE THOSE?

When you look at our customers—how hard they work, how much dedication they put into their craft—that makes me want to work harder for those customers to provide them with the solutions that they need to ultimately be successful.

For more insights into industry topics like turf health, nutrition, control solutions, and the latest in academic research, tune into our TurPh.Dudes podcast. Our TurPh.dudes are constantly connecting with industry leaders and turfhead game-changers so that they can share with you what's going on in the world of turf. You can subscribe on iTunes and Google Play Music, or tune in directly at www.harrells.com.

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TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

"Nobody does it better."

— Nate Dogg and Warren G

Middle-age mentors

Brent Downs revisits lessons absorbed from two major influences in his career and describes how to make relationships with those you respect mutually beneficial.

It's 2018 in San Antonio and I am walking through the hallway into the GCSAA Conference. I see Matt Weitz and Justin Sims talking with each other. Officially, they are the director of agronomy at the Vaquero

Club in Dallas and the director of grounds and facilities at the Alotian Club in Roland, Arkansas. But for me, their title is more simple and much more important.

My Mentors.

I cut a hard left and beeline my way to say

hello.

"All the supers in this joint and the best two I could find to learn from are you two geniuses?" I ask in jest.

"I'm sorry," Justin deadpans. "Do I know you?"

"Hey, Downs," Matt says. "Good to see you

finally finished that greens route I assigned you at Victoria. Only took you a shade under five years ..."

Shade. Some things never change.

In my opinion, they are the best in the business. That is incredibly biased, but to me, you'll never find two better talents. Each one serves a little bit of a different role for me as a mentor and I wanted to use this article to not only explain what they taught

me but explain how a person like me can get value out of having mentors and also the responsibility they carry as the one being mentored.

HUMBLE(D) BEGINNINGS

Use the word mentor and you may picture somebody who is much older, wiser and more experienced. Though you might be fooled by the George Clooney gray he has on top, Justin is a



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

Justin Sims, left, is one of two former co-workers who have mentored superintendent Brent Downs.

you the story of how I learned from two people. What does that have to do with mentoring? I learned three valuable rules in how to choose a mentor and they may be useful for you if you do not currently have one.

1. Don't force it. Let the mentor relationship come together organically. You will work for several people in your career. Do not automatically go in with the idea that you may or may not learn more from a certain individual based on their reputation or lack thereof. You may be surprised who ends up being the biggest influence in your career. Try to eliminate any predisposed notions of who you want to learn from because you may be surprised who you end up really fitting well with.

2. Diversify! I have two mentors, and if somebody ever came along who provided another influence, I would have no problem adding a third. It does not have to be a closed group. There might be some people you draw from more than others, but I would highly recommend you have multiple influences in your career. That way, you get multiple sources of info and multiple ways of looking at things. Matt and Justin are different people with different ways of thinking, and I think that is outstanding. It

to be your best every day. My time with Matt toughened me up significantly to the rigors of the golf course business and I am unbelievably thankful to him for that. It is a tough business dealing with general managers and boards and other demanding folks, and Matt prepared me for that by breaking me down and being tough on me. There were times I didn't enjoy it in the process, but I would not be where I am now without that guidance and understanding about how to find medium ground and places of mutual respect.

Matt is one of those leaders who makes you earn it every single day. You cannot rest on your laurels. You always must strive to be better than you were before. Golfers in this business are the same way. Previous good seasons do not matter. All that matters is what you are for that golfer that day and working for Matt prepares you for that. He is also one of the best Transition Zone agronomists in the country, and he prepared me for the challenges the tough growing environment presents.

THE TURN

So now I have used a lot of column space to tell



year younger than I am.

I worked under Justin at a golf club in 2008-09. Justin is one of the best crew managers and motivators I have ever worked for. He is calm, cool and collected. The more stressful it gets, the more he becomes the steady hand at the ship's helm. I have always tried to emulate that style as the summer stress picks up because I think crews tend to feed off that calm, steady force.

The second thing I take away from my time with Justin is that to be a great people manager and leader you must recognize that people are individuals. You may all adhere to the same rules and they apply to everybody, but the management techniques you use are suited to the individual personality. Justin takes the time to get to know the people he works with and will apply different techniques

based on the individual. He is willing to adapt his style to each person to get the most out of that person. That takes a very progressive thinking manager.

I worked for Matt in 2011-12 at a southern Indiana golf club. Matt prepares you to face the daily rigors of being a superintendent. Matt is an incredibly detail-oriented, results-driven and demanding superintendent who pushes you



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



Matt Weitz, right, demonstrates managerial qualities that have left an indelible impression on Brent Downs.

promotes critical thinking and perspective. That matters in this business. Just because one solution works in one situation does not mean it will work in another. Much like your investments, diversify your sources of information. You may be amazed how many different things you can take away from that.

3. Develop your own style. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery but you still must be your own person. I like to think that I have taken various parts of both their styles in leadership and agronomics and incorporated them into my program, but I

am still true to what I believe. I take the input that I get from them and decide where it is best suited. Some things fit and some do not. You are looking to your mentors for information and guidance. How you choose to use that is up to you. That style or information might have worked for them at the place they were, but you must learn what works for you. Be you. Be genuine and be authentic and let the chips fall where they may.

YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TOO ...

As the person being mentored, you may think that you get all the benefits and none of

the responsibilities. I am here to tell you that is not true — and while there are some who may disagree with my viewpoint on this, it is a powerful motivator for me.

As this relationship develops, your mentors will inevitably begin to take an interest in where your career goes and what you accomplish after you have moved on. In my case, both Matt and Justin have been instrumental in what I have gone on to accomplish long after I no longer worked for either one of them. They have provided insight and advice from their experiences, and they have been my lead references for every job I have applied

for since. They have put their own names and reputations on the lines in representing me. And for me, that comes with a responsibility that I welcome. If I do not do my job to the best of my ability, I feel that I not only let myself down, but I also let Matt and Justin down. You should take a lot of pride in representing those who helped get you on the career track you are currently on.

THE STORY COMES FULL CIRCLE

During this past COVID-19 summer, I made a road trip out West (while using every safety precaution, of course) to visit Matt and Justin. I

spent a lot of it thinking about the stories from days gone by with both of them and how things had evolved. I think the best mentor relationships evolve into more of a mutual respect, then peers and, in my case, friends. I am reminded of a quote from the late, great Steve Wright, CGCS, when he told a prior assistant who asked him for a reference, “I hope, these days, you think of me less as a mentor and more as a friend.”

As I met with both of them and we talked about various things we deal with, it dawned on me that things really had come full circle. They are still the people I go to for advice, but the conversations have changed into an exchange of ideas, old stories, jokes and a very mutual respect. That trip was fulfilling to see how those relationships have evolved.

So finally, to Matt and Justin, I would like to say, “Thank you.” Thank you for what you have taught me and will continue to teach me, and thank you for being a huge influence in my career. I could not have made it to where I’ve gotten — and where I will end up — without either one of you and I am thankful for that. In my opinion, there are not two better people I could have asked to help me with my journey.

Nobody does it better. GCI

Brent Downs, CGCS, is the director of agronomy at Otter Creek Golf Course, a 27-hole facility in Columbus, Indiana. This is his second *Golf Course Industry* contribution. Follow him @OtterCreekGCM on Twitter.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



Oh, so much to learn!

Richard Brown shares five pointers for how assistants — and, really, anybody — can better serve themselves and their club.

Today's market is flooded with assistant superintendent jobs, but getting the job is only half the battle. Taking over a new assistant role can be a daunting task but rest easy, you've got this. Take these five suggestions to become the best assistant you can be for your club.

1. LEARN YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

Much like yourself, your superintendent has his or her own traits, habits, and so on and so forth. Learn them. Find out what they want and expect from you on a daily basis. Ask what properly doing your job looks like in their eyes. Your idea and their idea of what your job entails may vary. Keep in mind the little things too. It didn't take me long to realize my superintendent isn't very talkative in the morning. Not only that, but he enjoys a little quiet time to himself. I

can remember a former employee who frequently rushed in the office first thing in the morning, ready to solve all of life's mysteries and anything else he could think of to have conversations about. I could always recognize the blank stare when my boss was ready for some peace and quiet, and now any time I notice the same look I know to make my exit. Learning this quirk of his early on has helped me communicate better with my superintendent, and it's something I know he appreciates. Little things.

2. LEARN YOUR PROPERTY

This goes without saying but the sole reason we are all employed is the golf course. The piece of land that is X number of acres, has X number of greens, with X many bunkers is the reason we wake up and work hard every day. Study it. Know where all the irrigation heads are as well as the valves that feed them. Find all the drains and where they eventually leave the property. Learn the hot spots, the wet areas, the shade trees and what

gets dry, the quick connects and the shortcuts through the course, all of it. Learn them.

3. LEARN YOUR CREW

Management is such a huge part of what we do as assistants. Every crew member is his or her own individual person. Get to know them and how they think and act. What jobs do they enjoy doing? What jobs do they dislike doing? Who do they work well with? Who should you keep separate? They are a key part of the operation and proper management can make or break a crew. Learning these things will help you gain a better grasp of them as

individuals — and also the dynamic of the team as a whole. Happy crew. Happy super. Happy assistant.

4. LEARN YOUR CLUB

Sure, you met the head pro and shook hands with the GM. But take it a step further. Get to know the people responsible for accounting and HR. Take time to introduce yourself to the events coordinator, the F&B folks and everyone who is essential to the total operation of the club. The more you know and understand about how your club works, the better you can understand where you fit into it all.

5. LEARN YOURSELF

Find out who you are. No, I don't mean, say, take a trip to Joshua Tree or join the Marines. What I'm saying is find out who you are as a person, as a manager and as a leader.

Take time to identify your strengths and weaknesses, your limitations and where you excel. A simple Google search can refer you to several online personality tests that can be helpful with exploring this topic. What's the old phrase about not being able to help others until you can help yourself? Same kinda deal.

I'm telling you, don't sweat it. You've got this. **GCI**



The piece of land that is X number of acres, has X number of greens, with X many bunkers is the reason we wake up and work hard every day. Study it."

Richard Brown is the assistant superintendent at Orangeburg Country Club in Orangeburg, South Carolina. This is his second story for Turfheads Take Over. Follow him on Twitter @JRichardBrown.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



A time to **every purpose**

Veteran superintendent **Tyler Bloom** plunged into deep doubt at the start of an earth-turning year. By its end, he had recreated himself and his work — without ever compromising his passion or his why.

It's October 2019 and I am standing outside my home, deflated, my pregnant wife waiting with a glimpse of hope we would be returning to our home state of Pennsylvania. I poured the bad news that I came up short for the ninth time in a golf course super-

intendent search. Only this time, I could not hide the disappointment as I knew an opportunity was stolen from me not due to lack of experience, passion or proven systems, but rather a factor of pedigree.

I felt shamed by the search committee and general manager. At

no fault of my own or of the committee's, but they could not get behind our organization's culture or existing infrastructure decline despite my qualifications, references and proven systems. This is a dark truth that many outstanding professionals in our industry are faced

with in their climb up the professional ladder.

Selfishly, I placed great importance on my professional ascension over everything else, including my personal health. Anger, frustration and envy of others moving forward in their careers were feelings I had a difficult time

letting go. I experienced dramatically self-defeating lows that I imagine others feel throughout the course of a season or job search when things don't go according to plan.

The trajectory of my career as a golf course superintendent was at a crossroads, even



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

gizing of course management programs. In a weird way, I enjoyed the challenges of club politics and developing interpersonal skill sets to build relations even with my greatest adversaries. I could describe my career in one simple word: passion.

We are not born with this passion. We don't get a passion on our 18th birthday or on the day we ascend in the professional ranks. It's something we have to work at, it's something we have to refine. In the winter of 2019-20, I did some serious soul searching about my passion in the industry, and to find my why.

SETTING THE FOUNDATION

Starting with my personal life, I made a commitment to my wife that 2020 would be my last season in Baltimore. Her happiness and total support were of utmost importance to me. I realized how fortunate I am and how short-sighted I was to think I was not blessed. The golf industry provided us friendships, financial support and the ability to travel to places that most of my non-industry friends envied.

Through the advice of my closest peers and mentors, I began to develop an exit strategy by legally formalizing a conceptual business idea I had spent many nights dreaming about.

The simplest way to formalize a business for me was using a Limited Liability Company. I did not get hung up on a name, as I knew I could come back later on. Requiring fewer formalities, I had more options in setting up a management structure. I could also protect my assets — car, home and bank accounts — from liability. Most importantly, I needed flexibility on tax purposes.

The total cost to set up an LLC: \$390. I would recommend most if not all superintendents set up an LLC for future usage. It is an educational process when starting to think about business formation.

I was already in the process of earning an Execute Certificate in Talent Acquisition and Recruitment from Cornell University and certified partner with the Predictive Index as part of my continued education and training. These credentials would end up being important in distinguishing my credibility in my current position and establishing proper succession. I can't overstate the value of diversifying your résumé and credentials.

At the 2020 Golf Industry Show, I received notification from a supplier on scene that club finances were strug-

gling, and they wanted to know how they could assist us. Embarrassed that I was unaware and left out to dry by my own club leadership, I returned from GIS with restored frustration about my circumstances.

Where would my career go? The pain and emotion of losing out on another superintendent opportunity came back fresh, so I did not see the light at the end of the tunnel. I was dealing with conflicting emotions. In one instant, I was excited and rejuvenated for the 2020 season, but the realities of our business continued to elevate friction.

There were many sleepless nights not knowing how to manage up and address some

underlying tones and issues. I searched for answers from key mentors and industry professionals. I fell back into the downward spiral — and the season hadn't even started. Would I have a job at the end of the season? Did my club leadership even respect me? Were my skills transferable to other facilities? Would I need to take a step back in my career to get where I want? I assume many of these same questions are resonating with readers.

COVID-19 DISRUPTION

As COVID-19 took on an unpredictable path in March and April, I recognized that I had to put aside my personal differences and manage up. The big-picture reality was that I needed to play my part and put a plan in place to help the club survive, maintain course conditions as best as possible for a return to golf, and communicate with transparency.

At the same time, my wife lost her job. I knew I had to honor our commitment and it would be much earlier than expected. Saving our pennies, the rainy day appeared to be coming. Our second daughter was born on April 29, when the club remained shut down. As I returned to work 14 days after



We are not born with this passion.

We don't get a passion on our 18th birthday or on the day we ascend in the professional ranks. It's something we have to work at, it's something we have to refine."

though I knew I had many years left to grow and accomplishments to attain. Genuinely, I loved my job and being a golf course superintendent. I enjoyed the changing variables and environments, team development, networking, the learning opportunities and the strate-



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

quarantine, the state of operations was at peak uncertainty.

Unsure of what to do or where to go, I knew I was coming to the point of no return. Quite frankly, I began to drive by the little things that got under my skin. Mediocrity started to become acceptable with no consequences because financial hardships and uncertainty outweighed expectations. While we focused on the basics, I knew I was losing my passion and edge. I will be the first to admit that a lot of low-hanging fruit started to pile up. I am sure we can all look back at Q1 and Q2 with self-reflection and justify some of the limitations and sanctions imposed.

I recognized that no matter how much I wanted to help set



The total cost to set up an LLC: \$390. I would recommend most if not all superintendents set up an LLC for future usage. It is an educational process when starting to think about business formation."

Veteran golf course superintendent Tyler Bloom faced a series of professional and personal decisions in 2020.



the right course of direction, I couldn't force issues that were out of my control. By no means am I throwing the club leadership under the bus, but I learned a valuable lesson to stay in my lane. I was not tasked to be the COO or general manager. I needed to play my part as best I could, and stay away from trying to play hero and solving the world's problems.

These words are not meant to influence individuals to steer toward a different career path, but to relate to those who may be experiencing some of the downward spirals and to encourage consideration of Plan

B. The fallout for some facilities in the face of COVID-19 is real and still unclear. I am not a skeptic, I do not believe the sky is falling, but you have to protect yourself and put yourself in the best possible position.

After careful consideration of all options, including staying with my position, I recognized my personal life and my family's well-being would be at risk. The hardest part for me wasn't jumping into a new venture, but my fear of other people's opinions about my departure. I felt I was letting down a lot of friends, colleagues and members who had invested into me.

I resigned on June 1. Just 24 hours later, I ended up in the Franklin

Medstar Hospital ER in Baltimore with kidney stones at 2 a.m. I had been pushing off feelings of anxiety, doubt and nervousness for months. I had played out all the scenarios in my head, obsessed about things out of my control, and pushed myself at the expense of my own health and wellness. In an odd way, this was another example of the stars aligning to my next step.

I stepped aside from the daily role as golf course superintendent on June 12. Fortunately, the club respected my decision and supported my family's transition. We were able to develop a succession plan for someone else to take over my role, and I couldn't have been

happier to see a close peer come back into the profession. The club got a renewed sense of energy, my staff got a new leader to bring different ideas and management style, and I felt I did not leave a property so special to me underserved. If anything, they got an upgrade!

As luck would have it, a few opportunities presented themselves upon my return to central Pennsylvania. I knew I had a bit of security to fall back on while we pivoted to a new career path. The network I had developed throughout my career came back to assist me in my transition. Suppliers, former superintendents-turned-consultants, former members and new business rela-

tions had my back — it was a true win-win.

TRANSITIONING FROM A 'SIDE HUSTLE'

Now with a fight-or-flight scenario, I needed to transition my “side hustle” to paying the monthly bills. The summer months were spent building the foundation with financial advisors, investment groups, networking on digital platforms, taking sales webinars and acquiring new skills that I would need to grow as a potential businessman. Looking back, I intentionally committed to professional and career development by growing my network outside turf, building new critical thinking and business skills that would have served me in my previous role.

We relocated back home to central Pennsylvania, with my in-laws and parents within 20



If you are uncertain about your future, you need to do a hard self-evaluation of your next steps. Connect with trusted advisors who can keep an eye out and provide realistic viewpoints.”

minutes. It didn't take more than a day to realize we made the right decision for our family, despite some hurdles on the path ahead. What I embarked on was a vision to restore my passion in the industry I love and redefine my role in it. Golf is all I know.

There were many challenging days and weeks during the summer season amid a global pandemic. Superintendents are busy people and the rigors of the job can restrict business meetings and catch-ups. On the flip side, I recognized how quickly the challenge of being on the supplier side of things is when management does not

return a phone call, email or text message. We as professionals can do a better job of respecting each other.

After five months in my consulting role, I have been humbled and at times vulnerable to my own ignorance and cluelessness. While I am self-aware enough to understand my strengths, I continue to explore my blind spots as I am reminded of how much I don't know by all the great leaders and golf courses I visit.

Through nearly 70 site visits and a week volunteering for the LPGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club, I have a textbook of notes to share with others.

I realized quickly that many individuals are at career crossroads, just as I was. If you are uncertain about your future, you need to do a hard self-evaluation of your next steps. Connect with trusted advisors who can keep an eye out and provide realistic viewpoints.

The power of networking and building relationships cannot be overstated. As I continued to share ideas with industry professionals on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, I built an interesting connection with club golf professionals. As it turns out, there are plenty of PGA members who enjoy professional development and team-building and are dealing with similar career and professional development challenges.

CREATING MY OWN LUCK

The irony in my story is that nearly a month to the day after telling my wife I failed to secure that next career opportunity, I received a phone call asking if I would be interested in assisting a Philadel-

phia-area club in their pursuit of a new golf course superintendent. Coincidentally, a large focus for my original superintendent search was to oversee a William Flynn-designed property in the state of Pennsylvania. Now I would be tasked with helping the club find their newest caretaker of one of The Nature Faker's finest work.

I couldn't have been more lonely the last year, doubting my self-worth and my professional worth. I questioned my abilities and career decisions and had many naysayers along the way fueling the fire. However, it was my passion for the industry that helped me withstand the obstacles and keep me centered on my why. I found myself exactly where I belonged, as a steward of the golf industry and an ambassador for professional development. Accepting that there are things in this world we can never explain or control allowed me to just enjoy the process.

That is the irony of life. It is also its beauty. GCI



Tyler Bloom is a workforce and leadership consultant and founder of TBloom, LLC, a business he started in 2020 after 17 years working in daily golf course maintenance. He is a regular contributor to Golf Course Industry. Follow him on Twitter @tbloom_golf and @TBloom_LLC.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

Back to the future

Charlie Fultz stepped away from being a superintendent more than a decade ago. The events of 2020 created an opportunity to return to the job he loves.

If someone had told me that I'd ever be a golf course superintendent again, I'd have told them I never thought it possible.

I left the superintendent world in 2008 after 13 years as a head superintendent and almost 20 years in the business. My youngest son, Jakob, who was 4 at the time, had just been diagnosed with autism. In order to get him the services he needed, my then-wife had to take a part-time role with her job so Jakob could benefit from at-home services four days a week. Because of that move, I took a job with Grigg Brothers, now called GRIGG, as their

Mid-Atlantic technical representative. I had a long-standing relationship with Mark and Gary Grigg and had actually tried out several of their products before they ever hit the market. Stepping away as a superintendent was an easy decision, one that I'd make 100 times out of 100.

I knew leaving the profession was tough, but it was even tougher visiting golf courses on a weekly basis throughout the Mid-Atlantic. I knew many of the guys maintaining those courses, but I missed being a golf course superintendent. I believe it is something that gets into the blood, and I just knew I wanted

to be back running a golf course again.

As I stumbled into a three-year stint as a math teacher after my time with Grigg (eighth graders, no less), I had the opportunity to work on a golf course for several summers. The superintendent who got me into the business, Jeff Thompson, had grown in a gem of a course in central Virginia called Old Trail Golf Club, and I spent several summers spraying for him. It fed the itch I had, but I knew I ultimately had to head back to the classroom.

After getting back into turf and running my own athletic field management company,

an opening with the city of Harrisonburg, Virginia, popped up. They were looking to hire an athletic fields supervisor, and after spending the last five years with my own company and having grown in four soccer fields in my hometown, I was ready for the job. I was subsequently hired and oversaw fields for the first five months of 2020.

COVID-19 hit in March and with it all the rec programs disappeared. We were maintaining fields with no play on them. Fast forward to late April: the superintendent at Heritage Oaks announces he is moving South and planning his retirement from the business. With COVID blocking any new hires, the city can't hire a new golf course superintendent. A call from the assistant director to me opens a door that I thought was forever locked. Would I be interested in being the superintendent of the golf course while also maintaining the duties as the athletic field supervisor for the city?

As quickly as he asked the question, I responded. "Yes." I was 13 years removed from being a superintendent — and just having hit my prime at 50, I knew I was going to have to re-engage my brain for the life of a superintendent. I knew it was going to be a chal-

lenge, but I felt all along I could do it.

It wasn't that I forgot how to be a superintendent, I just had to remember how to be one. New (to me) fungicide chemistries, equipment upgrades, fertilizers and, oh, by the way, 25 acres of bentgrass tees, greens and fairways. Start date: May 11. I couldn't think of a better situation to try to learn a golf course and what it'll do than right before the start of the 100 days of hell.

Immediately, I was reminded of the fun of the job. Sleepless, worrisome nights. Hand watering collars and greens to keep them alive. Watching some tees die over the Fourth of July weekend when temps hit 103 degrees, the humidity drops to about 20 percent and the wind blows 20 to 25 mph all day. And, finally, Labor Day, aerification and the beginning of fall.

And I had a blast. I love this profession, I love this business and I love the challenges a golf course brings each day. From what I hear, the golfers seem to like what we are doing and the conditions are pleasing. While I don't feel 37 anymore, I am upright and excited about Year 2 (which is really Year 15). It was a long, winding road but the end of the line was well worth the drive. **GCI**

Charlie Fultz is the golf course superintendent at Heritage Oaks Golf Course and the athletic fields turf supervisor for Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation in Virginia.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

Cold November Rain 3.0

Yes, you can still thank yourself. **Jason Hollen** returns to our pages to explain how this year affected his view of self-gratitude.

So here we are again. You knew there was no way I *wouldn't* pen the ending to this trilogy, this year of all years. I mean, come on. Wildfires, hurricanes, Kobe, a presidential impeachment, murder hornets, a stock market crash and subsequent bounce, Eddie Van Halen, a worldwide pandemic. I think Billy Joel has the material for the follow-up to "We Didn't Start the Fire." The premise remains virtually the same. It is November. It is raining, but it's not cold this time. And the Masters was on right before Thanksgiving. Whiskey Tango Foxtrot?

In the last paragraph of last year's essay, I suggested several ways to take care of yourself during the upcoming season. I wrote, "Make it a priority. And one year later, hopefully you thank yourself."

CAN YOU THANK YOURSELF THIS YEAR?

This once-in-a-generation pandemic has caused the world to look at a hard reset. But on an individual level, did you reset and take care of yourself? My story is no more important than any other superintendent's story around the country. In fact, some of the stories I have heard truly humble me when I consider the strength

and resiliency of others. We have all dealt with previously unimaginable situations. There have been successes during this challenging time but also some major losses. No matter your view of the virus and all that comes with it, you would be hard-pressed to find one person in the country who has not been impacted by it. Personal loss, professional loss, financial loss, societal changes

in education and everyday life — the virus has touched it all.

CAN YOU THANK YOURSELF THIS YEAR?

Stepping foot on a golf course became an escape from reality for many — new players and veterans alike. A sport already predisposed to social distancing was a perfect choice to lead the way during a very anxious time. And

superintendents were thrust into the spotlight. I know there were hard decisions and long hours to just "maintain" courses at a minimum level. And you did it. Record rounds played, true appreciation from golfers and customers for the challenge accomplished, a renewed enthusiasm that there is light at the end of tunnel. Did you take a moment to step back, take a deep breath and thank yourself? If you didn't, you should have.

CAN YOU THANK YOURSELF THIS YEAR?

Honestly, I can say yes to this question. Or at least I gave it a committed effort. There were many highs and lows this year, both professionally and personally. It was a challenge to navigate. But I took my own directive to heart. I dabbled in some of those suggestions with a mix of meditation, exercise, service to others and, most important,

time with friends and loved ones. In the midst of a raging pandemic, I found little pockets of peace. They do exist. Much like the eye of a hurricane, there is calm in a storm. You just have to prepare for it and recognize when it has arrived.

Our experiences in life are the catalysts for creating the people we are and shaping our own perspectives. I want to thank *Golf Course Industry* for the opportunity to dive into my experiences a little deeper and write a bit about them these past few years. It has helped shape my perspective for the future in a positive way. There will be no *Cold November Rain 4.0*. (You have to know when to step away.) The writing will continue, just with different subject matters.

CAN YOU THANK YOURSELF THIS YEAR?



I hope you can and will continue to do so. GCI

Stepping foot on a golf course became an escape from reality for many, new players and veterans alike. A sport already predisposed to social distancing was a perfect choice to lead the way during a very anxious time."

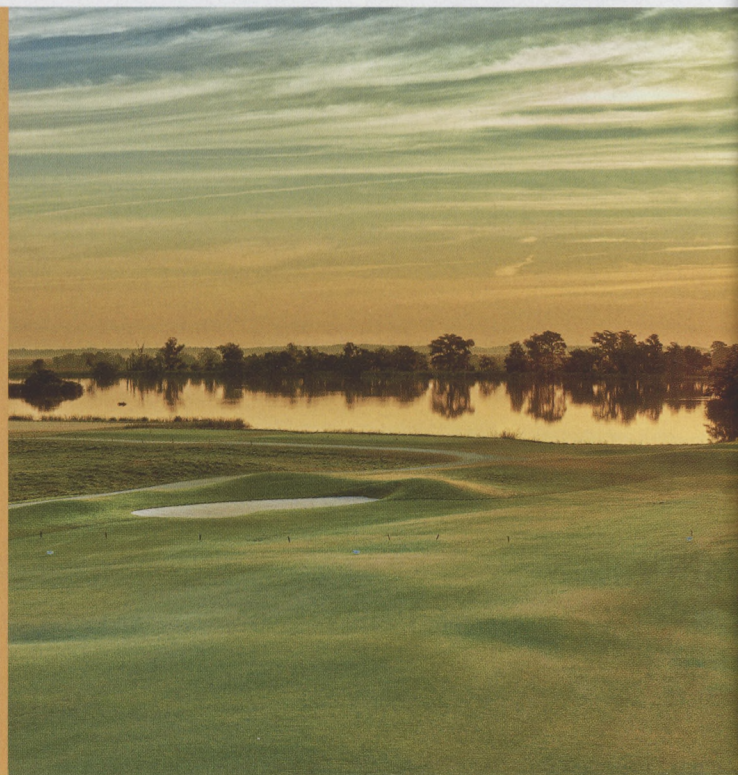
Jason Hollen is the golf course and grounds superintendent at Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, West Virginia. This is his third Turfheads Take Over submission. Follow him @almostheavngolf on Twitter.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

Subtle self-promotion

Uneasy about openly touting your value to the bosses? **Nelson Caron** recommends a roundabout way. Learn how to think in terms of assets instead of grass.



Self-promotion has long been a difficult task for superintendents. On the one hand, we recognize that self-promotion is necessary to create the visibility and credibility we need to get ahead. Yet, on the other hand, we don't advocate for ourselves because we feel uncomfortable. Because we are historically so inept at self-promotion, I propose we take a different approach. Can we promote ourselves in a way that takes the grandstanding out of it?

I have a simple solution. Instead of trying to articulate how wonderful you are, focus on your golf course and how your work and staff contribute to a positive member or

guest experience.

Ask yourself these questions: How does your work and how do your responsibilities help your facility reach its objectives? Taking your "self" out of self-promotion and basing the case on the work achieves two outcomes:

1. You are able to identify your value proposition and understand how your work benefits the facility and other departments.

2. You are able to advocate for the work product more comfortably than you would be simply advocating for yourself.

Here's a self-promotion example that has worked well for me. Annually, like many clubs, our club's board of directors turns over several po-

sitions and new members are elected. During their first month in office, the general manager hosts a "board walk-through," which basically means touring new board members through the club's 13 departments, making a short visit with all department heads. I found this event to be an ideal time to tactfully self-promote.

I also feel incredibly self-conscious talking about myself, so I devised a plan to let numbers and the overall scope of my responsibilities do the talking for me. I created a PowerPoint presentation that demonstrates my department's recent achievements and major projects coming up, informs the new board on the operational and capital budgets, and intro-

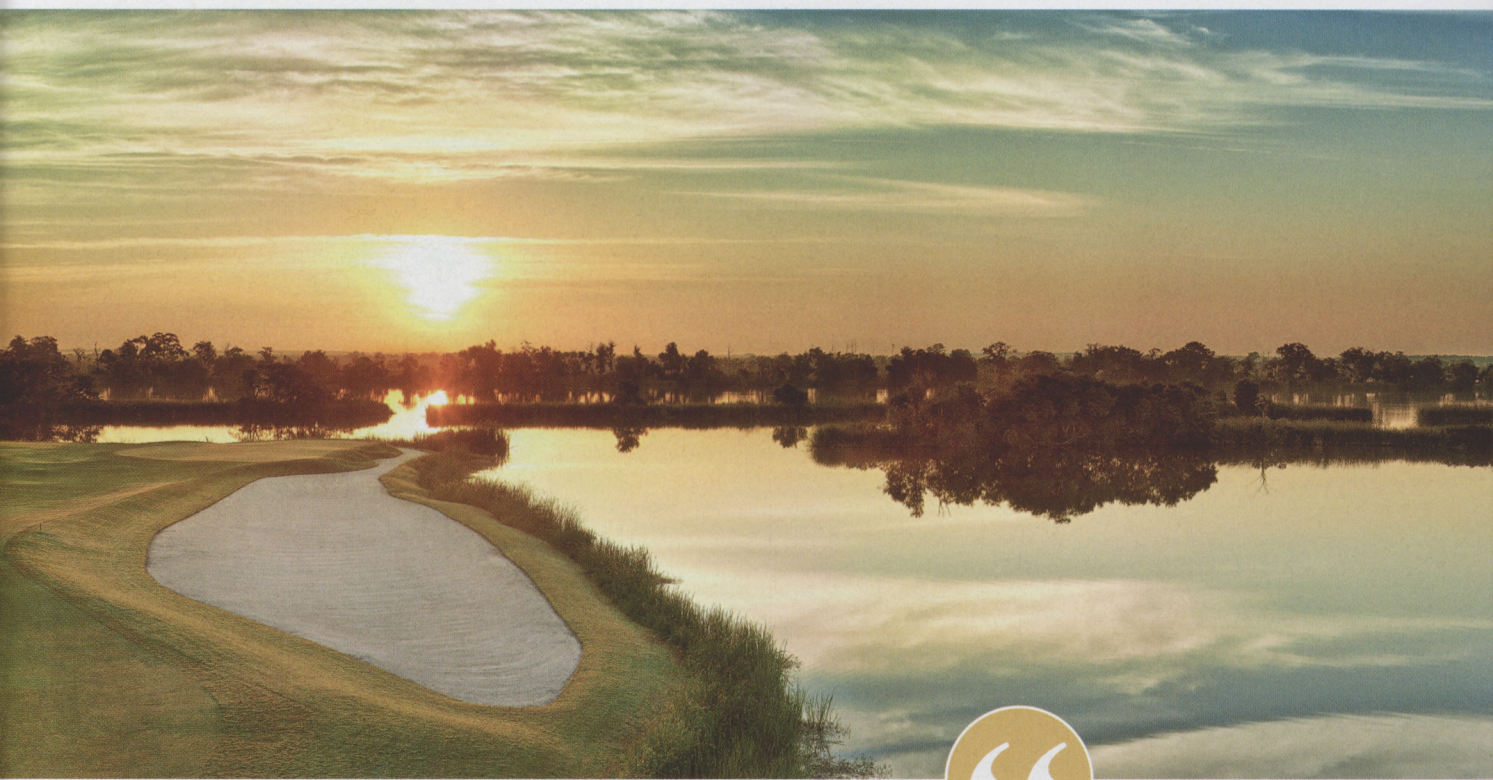
duces key personnel and explains their jobs. Most importantly, I share with them what my asset management responsibilities are as director of golf and grounds maintenance.

Asset management? Yep, that's right. I manage assets at the club, not just an operational budget. And, it turns out, I quantitatively manage more than 60 percent of the club's total assets — and, most likely, so do you at your facility. Whether you know it or not, as a golf course superintendent, you most likely manage well over half of the facility's assets. Trouble is, unless you understand this yourself — and until you learn how to communicate that fact and tell the facility's leadership this is the case — it

will go unnoticed, unrecognized and, therefore, inadequately rewarded.

I interviewed Ray Cronin, founder and chief innovator of Club Benchmarking, a company with a mission to help clubs find financial insight by using reliable club industry data and proven key performance indicators to analyze, manage and predict performance. I asked Cronin about his experience dealing with clubs and their superintendents as it pertains to asset management.

"My guess is the average superintendent doesn't realize the implications of their asset management position," he says. "I have seen it with my own eyes — in club after club (as a consultant). There is a massive opportunity to



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educate superintendents on the criticality of them understanding they don't just manage people and grow grass — they manage millions of dollars of assets and doing so requires them to be able to communicate effectively with their committee and board."

Reviewing my notes after the interview, I felt Cronin was preaching to the choir. I thought, "Finally, someone else actually realizes what I do for a living." Cronin is right! We do manage millions of dollars in assets. Years ago, the first time I shared my PowerPoint slides with the board of directors, they were honestly surprised — and even shocked — that I was the individual overseeing this huge portfolio of assets.

After the first presentation went well, I refined it for future board walk-throughs. With every passing year, my reputation as a responsible business manager grew dramatically. I was awarded more responsibilities if I opted to take them on. I was now not only known for producing quality turf, I also became recognized as a responsible leader at the club due to my financial acumen.

Ironically, I didn't really do anything differently than any other superintendent. I simply demonstrated to the club what being a superintendent really entailed. I translated my job responsibilities in terms they understood ... the language of business.

When it comes to quantifying asset man-

agement and discovering your asset management responsibilities, consider that at the average facility the largest area of capital needs is the agronomy department. In fact, the agronomy department accounts for around 45 percent of capital needs over a 20-year period. Examples of those capital

needs include irrigation systems, greens, bunkers, tees and course maintenance equipment. The impact you have on the facility as a business manager and the "assets" you manage is paramount to the health of that facility.

You have heard it for years: "The golf course superintendent is the

most important person on the property." Well, I quantified it. If you're curious about learning more about your asset management position, start with reviewing recent capital reserve studies and digest that information. If the facility doesn't have one, tactfully ask your general manager or controller



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



to provide you with the facility's asset summary document. This document is basically a list of all the assets in the facility's possession, usually organized by department. The typical document will have a description of the asset, when it was acquired, useful lifecycle, depreciation and a total value of the item. Determine all the items that you manage and add their value.

Remember, someone

must manage these items no matter how big or small — and it's probably you. The maintenance building, spare reels for the fairway mowers, tractors, the bathrooms on the course, the tools in the shop, the recycle wash pad, the furniture in your office, the satellite boxes, the pump house, the pumps in the pump house, the actual land that the architecturally designed golf course sits on and the golf course

itself are all assets that need to be managed.

After completing this simple exercise, you will begin to develop an understanding of the value of the assets you manage at the facility. And that is just the beginning. You will learn a lot more if you just look.

So, who cares? You should. If you never tell leadership about the other side of the job that you perform, they will reduce your role to the guy who

“just cuts grass.” Ironically, the guy who “just cuts grass” is the person with the most financial responsibility in terms of management, operations, capital and overall asset management. When you look at raw numbers, if a membership or manager is interested in the financial health of a facility, they should come talk with you, the person who manages more than 50 to 60 percent of the facility's assets.

How does this translate to you personally? Most likely in your bill-fold. There is no set way, standard, or protocol in which facilities pay their superintendents. I have

spoken with superintendents who are paid very traditionally and others who are compensated in more unconventional ways such as profit sharing or special fringe benefits. However, one compensation strategy that seems to be popular in explaining superintendent salaries in the private sector is the “10 percent rule.” That is, that superintendents are paid roughly 10 percent of their annual maintenance budget.

Is that rule an accurate measure of your worth to the facility? Or should the formula be more closely linked with total asset management? **GCI**

Nelson Caron is director of golf and grounds maintenance at The Ford Plantation in Richmond Hill, Georgia. Follow him on Twitter @NelsonjCaron. This article initially appeared in *Through the Green*, the official publication of the Georgia GCSA.

Project pointers

The stakes are high when your course embarks on improvements. **Kelly Shumate** examines what superintendents need to know before construction commences.

Golf courses continue to forge forward with renovations, restorations and other enhancements. Before you enter project mode, remember every action you take today will have short- and long-term ramifications. By no means am I trying to play architect at your course, but here are a few things to consider based on my maintenance and design experiences.

BEFORE MAKING A DECISION

First and foremost, plan, plan and plan some more.

Planning a project takes time. To get a good start, determine overall, immediate and long-term needs. One of the most important pieces is to get out your crystal ball and try to forecast where you will be regarding available labor. Everyone reading this has already faced a staffing shortage, and I can't imagine ever going back to the numbers we had 20, 10 or even five years ago. Plan accordingly to where you think your staffing levels will be

during the lifespan of the upgrade.

Once you determine your needs, begin to prioritize. It's nice to get everything on the wish list, but be prepared if not everything gets granted. Cost out every project that needs attention — even if some aspects might be out of financial reach.

Contractors are facing the same labor challenges as superintendents. Everyone is stretched too thin and most projects are done in phases now. This is unlikely to change soon.

AFTER MAKING A DECISION

Items to focus on if tees and greens are on the list:

Tee resurfacing. Are they properly sized for play levels now? What is envisioned in the future? How are they maintained? Can they be maintained with a triplex vs. having to deploy a team of walk mowers every mow?

Greens construction. Proper mix/soil and drainage are key factors. Once a mix/soil is selected, budget for proper testing so you will receive desired consistency throughout

the project. Work with a lab and agree on how many samples will be needed throughout the project, and when they will be needed. Make sure the green can be constructed in a way that it can be mowed with a triplex unit. Even though you might prefer to walk mow and currently have the staff to do so, it's best to prepare for what might happen. If there is anything this year has taught us in the turfgrass industry, we need to be prepared during a crisis to be as efficient as we can.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: BUNKERS

A lot of projects that I have been hearing about simply involve coring out new floors and adding new drainage, new liner and new sand. This is shortsighted and not doing your facility justice. Think about how many bunkers you currently have. Are they all need-

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ed? Are the sizes needed? Can anything be done to shape water away from them on the outside without compromising the intent of the hazard? Are they set at proper angles and depth?

Let's focus on bunker quantity and sizes. Here is where you get out your crystal ball (again) and try to forecast future staffing levels. If you can't properly maintain them now, why not reduce where possible? Do you have to rake them all by hand now? Can you reshape them so they can be spun out mechanically?

Focus on proper depth next. Say you have a long par 3 or 4 with a bunker cut on the front right of the green. You will likely notice large deposits of sand thrown out on the green. It's a good bet that bunker, although maybe very strategic, is set at an improper depth. If it was cut deeper, maybe as

much as 3 to 4 feet, would you have all that sand thrown out on the green surface every morning? If the problem is addressed during the renovation, bunker placement remains the same. But it's probably more strategic to stay away, because it presents more of a challenge at a deeper depth.

The focus then shifts to faces and their maintenance. If there is currently a problem, why not address it during the reconstruction and fix it for the long term? Most bunker problems usually start externally, not within bunker confines. Drainage problems and mowing of faces and surrounds are common problems. Make sure you are giving ample consideration to these areas.

Lastly, we all need to remember what a bunker is at its core. It's a hazard, and sometimes it needs to play as such! **GCI**

Kelly Shumate is the director of golf course maintenance at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. He has helped design multiple courses, with the most recent one being The Ashford Short Course.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



The other 97 percent

Tim Gerrish revisits his experiences with local golf courses and reassesses what makes a layout special to the customers who support them.

It's easy to know when you're on a golf course that merits a Top 100 consideration. Often the wind, distant views, or even just native plantings and exposed, sandy soil enhances your experience. There is a solid routing that flows sinuously over the terrain and alternates direction. Besides testing the player with every club, the course must also entice the shot maker to move the ball. A slight fade or power draw brings the player to a prime approach angle, and there are architectural

nuances in tee angle, bunker location, slope, and green contours. A Top 100 course hits all of these marks.

The National Golf Foundation tells us there are roughly 16,300 courses dispersed among 14,300 golf facilities in the United States. If we take the Top 10 courses in each state, we have 500 of the best courses that could possibly be considered for discussion for a Top 100 list. But does that mean the other 97 percent lack merit? Do they not test the common player's skill? Do they not allow for a competitive match?

While I've played, studied and admittedly even drooled over many top-rated courses, I still get excited to play any course that's new to me. I don't harbor any preconceived notion of the course's value, character, architect or strategy. I approach playing as an opportunity to explore a landscape. My observations and questions begin at the course entry. How and why was the land selected to be a golf course? Was the designer an accomplished player or an architect? Who built the course? Was it an experienced golf construction

company or a local contractor led by someone who worked for a famous designer? What were the goals for this course; was it foreseen as a playable course on a limited budget, or a regional destination? As a golf course architect, I consider all of this before even reaching the first tee.

Spending my formative years in Maine — where, interestingly, there isn't a single regionally-ranked course, never mind nationally-ranked layout — I played all sorts of local courses. Some were older, others newer, and all were public. Many

were 9-hole tracks that, for what they lacked in maintenance, they made up for in quirkiness. Interestingly, there was very little difference in maintenance between the newer courses and old tracks.

Most of the older courses had holes that had strategic merit. When held against the top courses in the region, especially courses built in the last 20 years, the older courses' overall strategy might not have had as many options, but the designers certainly made you think. Sometimes, it was as simple as asking a player to hit the



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ball to where they could then best approach the 2,500-square-foot green. Other times, trees influenced the shot, forcing players to go either up and over or around. This might have something to do with why I'm not much of a vertical hazard supporter these days! Some of the courses we played were newer, designed after World War II, but were still older than the new crop of 18-hole courses. Back when we played, it was the opportunity to play that mattered, rather than a course's lack of status as a classic or famous course. None of us really cared.

Today, for many, the opportunity to just play does not seem to be enough. There seems to be more interest in playing the best courses, much of this popularized by social media. I've met a number of golfers who haven't even heard of one of the newer ranked and slightly controver-

sial Sweetens Cove in South Pittsburg, Tennessee. Shocking to me, but should it be?

This summer I made a point of stopping at various local courses that weren't normally on my radar. The parking lots were always full, even later in the day — though admittedly perhaps this was due at least in part to COVID-19. Some of the holes reminded me of the quirkiness I use to see on the courses back in Maine. On one course, there were boulders set randomly near or in landing areas. They aren't strategically located, as they would be if they had been set one-third the fairway width from the best approach to define a "Hogan's Alley." Most of the players I observe on such courses have a difficult time knowing what side of the fairway their ball will land anyway. Do they have a moment of surprise when they notice that hitting their tee shot

randomly on the right side of the boulder gives them a better angle? Do they learn that an approach shot from the left side is nearly impossible given that the green surface slopes away from them? Is there an, "A-ha!" moment, or do they just chalk up their lack of success to a poorly played shot, not even realizing what the course has to teach them?

Sure, these local courses aren't great courses, but with improved maintenance they could be well worth a round and could still teach a player a thing or two about strategy. We have to be careful not to overlook such courses in favor of tradition when deciding what makes a good course. Isn't the quality of a course's strategy somewhat subjective? Are its pedigree and exclusivity truly the most important measures by which we assess it? In the same token, is difficulty really a measure of how good a

course is? From a design perspective, difficulty is the easiest characteristic to achieve. Conversely, providing shot options and clear strategy are much more interesting.

Perhaps good maintenance should not affect course rankings. Design affects the ability to maintain a golf course, and any difficulties are often overcome by increasing the budget. The way a course plays, as in how the ball reacts with the turf, has a lot to do with the designed slopes, but also how tightly the grass is cut and how firm or dry the soil conditions allow. What if course raters were taught to see the shot options, but would also take into consideration lack of maintenance? Should a course's architectural merit be determined by a facility's reduced maintenance budget?

From my perspective, the characteristics that have the most influence on my assessment of a course are as follows: Is the course fun? Did it make me think about my shot? Is there variety in playing length? Are the holes unique enough that you can easily describe each one in the car on your way home? Finally, can I walk the course easily (this in-

cludes mountain courses — see Capilano in British Columbia)? My favorite course might not be what many would define as the best, but favorites are subjective and personal, and it is important to remember that this is just golf! We are all entitled to enjoy different courses for different reasons, but it's important to be mindful and not to allow prejudice to prevent you from being open to certain courses over others.

As an architect, one of my main goals is to create an intelligent purpose for the player to strike the golf ball. Through the recent rise in public interest in architecture, increased popularity of architecture websites and creation of numerous classic period architects' societies, players have a lot more exposure to what good design is (as well as how subjective good design is). We want to "design up" courses, not "dumb them down" with a lack of inspiring strategy. Let's encourage players to experience good design in its many forms, regardless of status. What a player decides is good design is not up to us. Most golfers are really out to have fun. Look around your region; there are plenty of courses where you can return home having had a good experience. Who knows, maybe they'll rank in your Top 100 list. **GCI**



Tim Gerrish is a Rhode Island-based golf course architect and landscape architect with more than 20 years of experience as a project architect. Follow him on Twitter @GerrishRLA. This is his second Golf Course Industry contribution.



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What type of place do you want to create?

Consumers are seeking unique experiences in recreational pursuits. **Randy Hoffacker** makes the case for thinking of a golf course as a story.

In my profession of master planning new golf communities, revisioning existing golf facilities and enhancing golf courses through landscape design, I have studied and analyzed what exactly is the magic sauce that creates successful projects that leave timeless memories for the people who have enjoyed them.

For me, it all started with a great day of golf

that I will never forget. In the Southeast, there is a golf hotbed known for its pine straw-covered sandy soil, lush green forests, some big-name courses and several lesser-known facilities. It is one of the best golf destinations in the world.

This “boys’ golf trip” was a special one for me, as we were going to play a course that had been at the top of my list for quite some

time. The early morning 30-minute drive to the course took us through small-town America and featured local shops, pubs, diners and unique businesses one would expect in the rural countryside.

Anticipation was high, as I knew we had to be getting close. It was then that I spotted the unique signage tucked behind high sand dunes covered with wavy, na-

tive grasses that kind of guarded the golf course from the outside world. The entry road continued to meander through the sand dunes, offering a few carefully choreographed views of the golf course, helping build the excitement of the day. I will never forget that moment when, nearly to the clubhouse, the 360-degree view was so dramatic that we had no choice but to leave the

real world behind.

The air was fresh and the scene tranquil. As my golfing buddies and I walked past the driving range tee, we heard subtle bluegrass music, began to smell the aroma of comfort food served from the snack bar and discovered a diverse selection of libations, including a local beer I had never tried. “This is going to be a good day,” I thought to myself.



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We stepped onto the long porch of the 5,000 square foot cabin that overlooks the 18th green and boasts a high-vaulted ceiling and a historical lodge-like ambience. The staff's Southern charm encouraged us to slow down our roll and relish the day.

The starter at the first hole explained the course's conception, how it was constructed and the "local" rules. Now, it was go time! Interestingly themed and sculpted tee markers grabbed my attention and heightened my anticipation of something special to come. With a deep breath, I drew back my driver and gave it a swing, slicing into an area that I can describe only as an abyss. I took quite a bit of ribbing from my friends as I stepped off the tee. "Yeah, I have to get myself together," I thought.

The remaining 17 holes are still so vivid that I have shared my thoughts of them with hundreds of people. As a passionate golfer, I believe these moments should be felt more than a few times in our lifetime.

When a general manager, superintendent, director, owner or greens committee member asks me about updating their golf course, I begin by asking them a few questions of my own: As a



The golf industry is no different than the hospitality industry. We must weave these magic threads into the fabric of our properties to make them a timeless and authentic experience."

property team, do you have a collective idea of how you want patrons to feel as they arrive at your property? How can you provide a holistic experience so unique that your guests sing your praises long after the round? Most people I come across only put a Band-Aid on the problem and don't look at the entire facility and operation from a comprehensive approach. This is the reason that most facilities are maintaining but not growing.

These ideas that go beyond your daily operations encompass theming, branding, storytelling and creating a destination. Absolutely everything matters. Today's golfers are searching for places to play, and they are demanding experiences that make spending their time and money worthwhile.

The most success-

ful companies in the hospitality industry not only understand this, but they embrace it and fine-tune it to an art. Every detail is orchestrated by professionals to tell a story targeted to a specific, hand-picked market. The highest level of hospitality brands, such as Aman or Six Senses, are experts in custom crafting by specifically responding to the "place" where they are located.

"Place" is made up of local traditions and heritage, historical events, materials and patterns, native landscapes, architecture and home-grown ideas that have lasted the test of time. The golf industry is no different than the hospitality industry. We must weave these magic threads into the fabric of our properties to make them a timeless and authentic experience.

There are two approaches to creating an all-encompassing experience. One is spending a huge amount of money to create something artificial like Disney World. A great example of this is Shadow Creek, the legendary Las Vegas course. The other approach is to create something based on location. This doesn't necessarily have to cost a lot of money.

Taking a creative, out-of-the box approach that is driven by a well-thought-out vision adds tremendous value to your property. You are probably capturing more of the market than your competitors if you're already implementing some of these ideas. You are losing revenue if you are just another 18 holes. The experience includes, but isn't limited to:

Operations and service. How do you greet, right down to the detail of staff uniforms?

The landscape (natural or created). Everything a guest can see helps tell the story. Does yours?

Maintenance. Are we trying to maintain Augusta National, Chambers Bay or Erin Hills?

Interaction and branding. During the round and after, how do you look on social media?

Food and beverage. Are you serving a generic menu, or does it resemble local cuisine?

Ancillary golf "stuff." Flagsticks, trash cans, tee markers, etc. ... all of these are important.

The arrival experience. This actually is a long process that begins when a guest visits a website or social media, to their physical arrival and check-in. You have only one chance to make a first impression. Make it count.

So, stop and think how you can incorporate carefully chosen and executed components to differentiate your property from competitors and most compellingly tell your unique story.

Changes are often difficult. Knowing where and how to begin can be so daunting that taking the initiative to drive change seems like too much work. In my professional role, I support my clients in developing a "total golf experience" without breaking the bank.

I challenge you to take an honest and internal look at your own golf property. Perhaps these ideas will help you look deeper into your role and become the essential change agent to providing a total golf experience for your guests. **GCI**

Randy Hoffacker is the founder of Lee-J Studio, a boutique planning and landscape design studio that focuses on creating unique environments. Follow him on Twitter @rjhoffacker and Instagram @leejstudio.



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"Education is not the learning of facts,
but the training of the mind to think."

— Albert Einstein

Putting **observable roots** on campus

Ashley Wilkinson describes how and why Horry Georgetown Technical College remained committed to a project intended to promote outdoor learning.

As a college student so many years ago, I wasn't always sure Einstein's words were heard by my professors. More often than not, "memorization and regurgitation" were the terms that many of my professors liked to share. Indeed, as a professor now myself, I've been known to use a few similar snippy quips to my students. Yet I doubt anyone had a true mentor who felt that was the best way to learn.

During that period of my youth, I struggled to put it all together. Perhaps it was my tendency to be a troublemaker, rabble-rouser or whatever pithy term comes to mind to describe my lack of motivation, but I floundered early in my college experience. The questions I had all started with "But why?" My professors read from the script but taught very little. Among the more memorable things I took

from those days was the old sermon: "Look to your left. Look to your right. One of you won't be here next semester." How inspirational! Then I found turf school.

I immediately grasped onto the hands-on learning environment. I found faculty that actually cared if I understood the material. And if I didn't, they pushed me — and themselves — to make me a better student. The term "job ready" replaced the standard sound bites I previously heard. The new approach worked. I grew in both industry readiness and educational confidence. Those formative years, that hands-on education, shaped my future and the future of so many others.

Fast forward 30 years and the Golf and Sports Turf Management program at Horry Georgetown Technical College has gone back to its roots — in dramatic fashion. Yes, we still have an

amazing partnership with Coastal Carolina University and the management of the university's Hackler Golf Course. But this summer, amid so much uncertainty, the administration at HGTC stood behind its decision to financially support a new Turf Care and Demonstration Center.

The new facility, located in Conway, South Carolina, near Myrtle Beach, is a re-dedication to hands-on learning. Championed by GSTM department chair Charles Granger, the new turf center encourages students and industry to partner and improve the job skills and education of our next generation of turf managers.

"With the variety of backgrounds of our students, the national presence they represent and the emergence of new science and technologies, we

needed a way to better share the skills they must have to succeed," Granger told me. "I couldn't be more thrilled with the outcome of this endeavor and the industry partners who gave so much to the success of our new chapter in student mentoring."

The new turf center incorporates quite a grand vision into a rather small footprint.



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"We looked for the best location for the new project and found a small plot on our Conway campus that was perfect," Granger said. The location he spoke of is a 27,000 square foot area near the new building that houses the GSTM program. But picking the location was only the beginning. "We knew what we wanted but needed someone with vision to take us to the finish line," Granger said. That person became golf course architect Craig Schreiner.

Schreiner has designed courses across the country but has called Myrtle Beach home for more than a decade and has notable Grand Strand-area golf courses on his resume, including "The Granddaddy," Pine Lakes Golf Club. Schreiner quickly dove into the project. His background as both



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a landscape architect and civil engineer proved invaluable. As one might guess, the budget for construction was tight, which made Schreiner's background in shaping even more important. Schreiner created a design that included quantity amounts, required square footages and dimensions, and met requested timelines to complete the project on time and under budget. "Having a turf degree along with my design background made this project all the more fun to take on," Schreiner says. "We really worked hard to deliver a tremendous turf facility on a small footprint."

The new facility includes numerous turf plots that represent both warm- and cool-season turfgrasses. Numerous cultivars of Bermudagrass along with

zoysiagrass, Saint Augustine, paspalum and centipedegrass comprise turf plots incorporated into the rough and fairway. Additionally, two bentgrass cultivars and an ultradwarf make up a nearby nursery green. Schreiner designed the entire turf facility to be disguised as a short par 3 with an ultradwarf green and zoysiagrass tee box. He also designed a unique sand bunker to further the variety of studies the facility can provide.

The entire project looks like a beautiful golf hole, but in reality is a magnificent laboratory that one can also use to hone their short game! Industry partners assisted with a state-of-the-art irrigation system for every turf plot, green and tee. Other partners donated construction services, grasses, various



bunker liners, drainage, fertility and chemistry, and mowing and utility equipment. We've even added a drone with thermal imagery capabilities to further the study of soil and water conser-

vation.

"It has been an overwhelming show of support from our industry," Granger says. "There's no way this is possible without our community and the involvement of the turfgrass industry here in Myrtle Beach."

This doesn't mean we won't grill our students for excellence in the classroom. The classroom, though, has expanded into a wonderful outdoor facility. In a year when being outside and enjoying the fresh air has been more important than ever, this lab has already paid off with huge dividends. Our first-year students are gaining experience with numerous pieces of equipment while studying turf

cultivars and culture, maintenance strategies, and science-based applications. Second-year students have already maximized their time at the turf center while studying live turf pathology, insect activity, and the various chemistry and fertilization strategies needed to overcome these obstacles.

The best way I can sum up our hard work and determination — and what it means to our program's future — is to finish with a quote from Aristotle: "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." This project was years in the making, and we think it will be an overnight success. **GCI**



Ashley Wilkinson is a professor of golf and sports turf and golf course management at Horry Georgetown Technical College, where the Golf and Sports Turf Management program will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

Add spark to your routine



Reconnect with an old friend. Listen to a new podcast. Turn course glamour shots into artwork. **Gina Rizzi** offers tactics for boosting personal innovation.

A typical day! Wake up. Check your phone for text messages and social media. Brush your teeth. Shower. Make coffee. Have breakfast. Go to work. Get the crew out. Do tasks. Check emails. Go to lunch. More tasks, more email. Go home. Maybe exercise. Make dinner. Watch TV. Go to sleep. Wake up and start it all over again.

Each and every day, we have a choice to stick to our routines or to break the mundane. No doubt, some amount of routine can be healthy — it helps us feel organized, reduces risks and lowers stress. But it can also prohibit growth. We can grow accustomed to mediocrity. Unless we make the choice to create an extraordinary routine, or a sort of anti-routine. As we press through the challenges of 2020 and enter the new year, it's a great time to resist falling into headline news

negativity and renew our commitments to everyday innovation.

"Every time you try something new, allow yourself to be open to whatever experience arises," Dr. Abigail Brenner wrote in *Psychology Today*. "You are learning and expanding your repertoire of life skills and self-knowledge." This type of knowledge feeds innovation. A personal exercise that I use to spark innovation is called CAMPS. The acronym stands for Connectivity, Action, Moving the Pieces, Partnerships and Self-Improvement.

CONNECTIVITY means communicating, putting yourself out there and connecting with others. Not only friends or family, but new friends or associates. Send a text message, a note through LinkedIn, or pick up the phone — make a connection. Check in. Especially now. Through simply interacting, you ignite the power to grow

and intentionally open the door to thinking and viewing things in a different way. Set a goal to connect with at least one new person and reconnect with someone at least once per week.

With **ACTION**, be deliberate and random. Make a deliberate choice to do things out of your comfort zone that may feel random or awkward. One of the most useful inventions of our time was sparked by deliberate, random action — a man and his dog on a hunting trip. The man was inspired by burrs sticking to his dog's fur — and in 1955, George de Mestral invented and patented Velcro.

As adults, we don't always consider "play" time, yet it is crucial for creativity. Go on a picnic. Listen to podcasts. Run a virtual race for a charity. Be visible — volunteer, join a board. You will ignite a spark by NOT opting out.

MOVING THE PIEC-

ES is equivalent to "delegating meets chess" on a bigger, strategic scale. For example, if you work with a general contractor at your course, ask them for help beyond the traditional moving of the pieces. Perhaps they can write a series of articles for your member newsletter or deliver training modules for your crew. This saves time, provides value and shifts you toward strategic, innovative thinking. Consider what things in your life you can shift. Do this at least twice per month.

Pursue unique **PARTNERSHIPS** that make sense for you using the assets you have. If a start-up is launching, offer your expertise in exchange for equity. If you love taking photos of the course — many superintendents take beautiful pictures — partner with a local artist to design custom greeting cards, paintings or calendars from your photos. If you love to build things, partner with Habitat for Humanity and bring your crew along to change up

their routines, motivate and encourage team-building. Look for partnerships that align with your personal passions. Aim for one per quarter.

Lastly, always seek ways of **SELF-IMPROVEMENT**. Take classes, get a certification, read, listen to podcasts, meditate, exercise ... the experience of education spurs questions, ideas and knowledge to expand your thinking. In the words of Louis Pasteur, "Chance favors the prepared mind." Knowledge and self-awareness help arm us to approach tasks with passion, confidence and vigor. Try to push yourself to improve — in some fashion — daily.

Here's the thing, we control living to our fullest potential. Amazing things happen when we open ourselves up to what is possible. Try CAMPS. Check in with a loved one or friend once per month to make sure you are doing it. Practice these exercises regularly and you will create a spark in your routine to achieve innovation in every day. **GCI**



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER



Retirement in the time of COVID-19

Sandy Clark's career ended earlier than expected. That hasn't stopped him from displaying a zest for the industry and willingness to help others.

Retirements happen in several different ways and 2020 introduced us to a new one.

January 2020 started off exciting as we were rebuilding the second phase of greens and greenside bunkers at Barona Creek Golf Club. Last year marked the beginning of the project, with that work also starting in January. We closed nine holes each year and went to work. January 2019 began a stretch of some of the wettest months we had experienced in my 20 years, delaying completion from an estimate of late March to nearly mid-May.

Like all of us do, we met the challenge. We

opened our new Pure Distinction bentgrass greens in June 2019 to rave reviews. The bunkers looked fresh and new, and played beautifully. This year was going to be a treat because the weather was in our favor. My goal was to complete the project and stay, perhaps, until late 2021 before officially retiring.

By March, I realized that wasn't going to happen.

California began shutting down and requiring the stay-at-home approach to combatting the virus. We were forced to furlough most of the crew while a few of us stuck around to grow in the greens. When Las Vegas closed its gaming industry, I

knew we would follow shortly. With no gaming at Barona, no income would be coming in and deeper furloughs were coming.

I was furloughed in mid-April and told my assistant to expect to take over because I knew I wouldn't be coming back. I was right and it made perfect sense from a business decision. Having been there for 21 years with a very comfortable salary and experiencing knee replacements and three back surgeries, they couldn't afford to bring me back.

I had become a pretty costly employee. The same thing happened widely throughout the Barona property. Numerous 20-plus-year

managers and directors also had to go. Although disappointed I couldn't go out on my own schedule, I wasn't devastated. In fact, I was actually a little relieved. I was approved to undergo what I hope would be one final back surgery and was just waiting for the call about the surgeries being rescheduled. I underwent surgery May 12 and no longer had to worry about how long recovery would take, especially knowing I would otherwise have twisted the surgeon's arm and gone back to work too soon. Something about that total commitment to our golf course tends to make most of us put work before taking care

of ourselves. I was no different.

So, what does one do when you need time to recover and there is nothing to do but stay home and avoid the virus? Honestly, not a lot the first few months. Financially, I didn't have to worry, because I began saving for retirement early in my 50-plus-year career. Being home gave me the opportunity to go through physical therapy and focus on healing. Because this was a spinal cord surgery and not just a disk, I realized recovery would be a long, slow steady process to get back to where I want.

Now that I have a spine full of metal and several fused disks, it



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is simply going to take time. Easy priority! My goals are lofty, because I am not good at buying into this aging thing. Getting back on the golf course, on my mountain bike and returning to the many activities I enjoy will become a reality with a lot of hard work.

We were able to enjoy a nice road trip tied to my youngest son's 40th birthday. We drove through California, east of the Sierras, and would have enjoyed the scenery if the state hadn't been on fire. We spent a couple days in Boise to visit a high school classmate and golf buddy and traveled to Eastern Washington to visit a cousin I have rarely seen over the past 40 years. Manson, Washington, has nice wineries! Eventually we made it to Puyallup, Washington, and enjoyed spending time with my son, daughter-

in-law and our incredible granddaughter.

The next fun trip will be spending Christmas with both sons and all four grandkids. That will be the first time in many years. With grandkids ranging from 17 to 8, it is something I have dreamed of for a very long time. Hopefully the location selected will result in a white Christmas.

Because I really enjoyed my years in the golf industry, I honestly can't picture being fully retired. When the virus stops impacting so much of our lives, I plan to work with a couple project managers and architects and help oversee golf course remodeling projects. I always considered construction projects more exciting than daily maintenance, so it is a perfect fit. I am also considering helping out in sales with a hand-selected product or two

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My goals are lofty, because I am not good at buying into this aging thing. Getting back on the golf course, on my mountain bike and returning to the many activities I enjoy will become a reality with a lot of hard work.”



that would be beneficial in water management, one of the most critical areas of golf business in Southern California. I also look forward to future in-person Golf Industry Shows to visit with so many friends I have made over the years. I can't imagine just disappearing from the industry. That just doesn't work for me.

Retirement opens up the opportunity to work as much or as little as I choose and still participate in the industry I love. I just want to see all our lives return to normal. I am finally feeling like playing

golf is back in the picture and there are plans eventually for some exciting travel both in the United States and places around the world we have always wanted to see. I see the next several years providing exciting opportunities.

The only advice I would share is to prepare for the day when you retire. If it turns out to be a little before you intended, be sure you are financially prepared. Your health is key.

Stay healthy, stay fit and keep balance in your life because you want to have many years after retirement day to catch up on your dreams.

Plan retirement as if you were planning to make a career move. It requires planning goals

the same way you strategize your long-range golf course plans. The virus has complicated things for all of us, but it will go away.

A final reminder is don't delay saving and planning. Retirement is a little like watching your kids grow up. They start kindergarten and you suddenly turn around and find them graduating from college and starting their own lives and careers.

Fifty years, especially the past 21 at Barona, seemed to have gone by so fast it feels almost shocking. Prepare today, enjoy your success daily and retire with a plan so you can enjoy many years of sleeping in a little and having a stress-free life. Plan to enjoy. I sure intend to! GCI



Sandy C. Clark, CGCS, retired in 2020 after more than 50 years in the golf industry, including the past 21 as the superintendent at Barona Creek Golf Club in Lakeside, California. This is his second Turfheads Take Over contribution.



TURFHEADS TAKE OVER

Caring for aging turf

As grass on courses built during the golf boom of the 1990s ages, maintenance programs must evolve. **Scott Krout** offers tips based on his experiences in the Arizona desert.



When I started working at Superstition Mountain Golf and Country Club, there was no club and no golf. It was a level piece of land and I had the privilege of being a part of the team that helped create what it is today – a luxury private golf club with two spectacular Nicklaus-designed courses. Now, 23 years later, I find myself maintaining the same turf installed all those years ago.

Several staff members and I have been with the club for 20-plus years. We have come to know the property like the backs of our hands. We know exactly what has

been done to the turf over its lifetime, what's worked and what hasn't.

Young grass is resilient, easier to maintain and can quickly overcome challenges potentially detrimental to older turf. Like all living things, as grass ages it becomes more of a challenge to keep it healthy. It's more susceptible to disease, insects and soil issues.

CONTINUOUS MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

Every golf course consists of microclimates caused by variations in shade, wind exposure, elevation, slope and soil conditions. Some spots may need a little extra

water or less fertilizer and we must adjust our maintenance routines in these areas almost daily.

While we like to keep the use of insecticides and fertilizer at a minimum, we sometimes have to get more aggressive with insecticides, fungicides and fertilizer as the aging turf demands more care to stay healthy. This is especially true for intensely-maintained areas like greens.

SOIL AND IRRIGATION

As the courses get older, the soil tends to compact, making it more difficult for water to penetrate the hard ground, which is not always an easy feat in Arizona to

begin with. We've had to increase the frequency of cultural practices such as aerification, dethatching and topdressing to combat compaction and other soil issues.

The irrigation system is as old as the turf. We are regularly replacing or repairing components in the sprinkler heads and various other elements of the system. We also must keep a close eye on areas that are becoming less efficient and find ways to adjust programming to address these issues.

We live in a desert and must be good stewards of our natural resources. Golf courses get a bad reputation, but we are the most efficient users of water compared to things like HOAs, community parks, businesses and homeowners. Our courses are equipped with a state-of-the-art weather station to measure rainfall, humidity and other weather data to help determine the proper amount of irrigation water to put on the course.

OVERSEED

Our members enjoy golf year-round — and want to see green no matter the season. This means we undergo overseed nearly every year, which is extremely hard on our base Bermudagrass. Basically, as soon as the summer Bermudagrass is strong and vibrant, we scalp it almost to the dirt and

plant ryegrass. It's a constant cycle that injures the base turf and requires the team to shift how we care for and maintain the course as each type of grass needs different things in terms of water and fertilization to thrive.

This continuous transition between the two types of grasses is one of the largest challenges we face. There are only about four months when we are maintaining turf — the other eight are spent either growing it in or eliminating it, scalping, overseeding, transitioning and nurturing it into recovery. I like to joke that for those four months when the grasses are at their peak and the courses are lush and green, we are the smartest staff members on property. Members think we're heroes. The rest of the year ... well, let's just say we are apparently not so smart.

This year, to improve long-term conditions, we made the tough decision to not overseed tee tops, greens or rough. In some cases, these are areas that have been overseeded every year. It's a huge change for our members, especially the greens, but we believe it's a necessary evil to maintain the future health of the turf. It's a leap of faith and I'm grateful for the support from the club's owners and the understanding of our members. **GCI**

Scott Krout is the director of agronomy at Superstition Mountain Golf and Country Club in Gold Canyon, Arizona. This is his second *Golf Course Industry* contribution.

Globetrotting consulting agronomist **Terry Buchen** visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares 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.



DIVOT BOTTLE EXCHANGE STATION

Instead of having replacement divot bottles at the 10th tee, Scott Coleman, golf services manager at the Birmingham Country Club in Birmingham, Michigan, came up with the idea of mounting 20 divot bottles/holders on the exterior of the restroom building that are accessible from both the seventh tee and the 14th green. The club exchanged their old fleet of 72 golf carts for a new one and they kept the existing 144 holders and bottles, which cost approximately \$50 combined per unit when purchased new (E-Z-GO holder, part #28660G01, and bottle, part #28659G01). The holders were mounted to two 1-inch by 12-inch boards that were stained. The bottles are filled every morning and throughout the day by the pace of play patrol. This unique location provides easy access for persons playing either 9 or 18 holes. Zero dollars were spent for parts and two employees spent less than an hour to install. Dan Dingman is the superintendent.



TEE SIGN OPTIONS

Gary Zagar was the director of golf maintenance at the Quail Hollow Golf Club in Concord, Ohio, when the 36 holes were rerouted in 2008 because of a large clubhouse expansion. New tee signs were added after considering a few options: Course maintenance signs from suppliers would have cost about \$1,000 each and \$300 for each pole, granite rocks etched with the hole information were in the \$800 to \$1,000 range, and using a high-end local sign maker ran about \$500 each. They ended up going with a local studio who used an AutoCAD design printed on hard plastic that cost less than \$350 each, which included sleeves on the signs that fit over each 4-inch by 4-inch post. Concrete pavers were installed (\$70 each) and less than \$25 for perennial flowers and mulch, which replaced annual flowers. Installation time was less than an hour for each. Jeffrey Austin is the current director of golf maintenance. **GCI**



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 51-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at 757-561-7777 or terrybuchen@earthlink.net.

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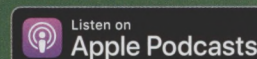
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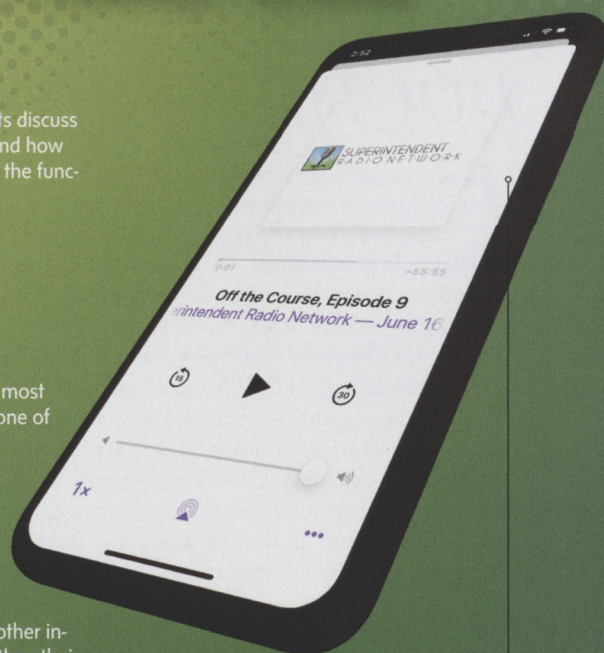


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Editors Guy Cipriano and Matt LaWell discuss the many (many, many, many) courses they've visited during the last month. Guy brings the decades of play and maintenance; Matt brings the fresh perspective of a hack golfer who appreciates the beauty of courses and the work required.





WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

I do not know about you, but watching Dustin Johnson win the Masters was just what the doctor ordered. It did not matter who won, the fact we were able to watch the Masters in 2020 would have been classified as good medicine in a year unlike any of us has ever endured.

It is hard to believe that at this time last year families were gathering for Christmas celebrations with hopeful thoughts for what the new year would bring. Now, here we are one year later after enduring arguably — actually, I do not even think it is arguably — the most stressful year on the planet in our lifetimes.

Lockdowns, quarantines, self-isolation and closed businesses led to high numbers for unemployment and uncertainty. Mix that with civil unrest, peaceful protests and riots in parts of the country, followed by a contentious election and it felt like 2020 was guilty of piling on.

And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic surged again late in the year, leading to increased measures and more lockdowns and closures for parts of the country. As Charlie Brown would say, “Good grief!”

So, back to Augusta National Golf Club and the November Masters. For those who truly know me, it is no surprise the Masters is my favorite tournament and I binge on everything Augusta National each spring. Shoot, I wrote about the awesomeness of their impeccable attention to detail in these very pages shortly after the 2019 Masters, won by Tiger Woods.

Seeing Augusta National sprinkled with the golden hues of autumn was breathtaking. Seeing more of the golf course without patron stands and patrons certainly added an interesting element

for those of us who geek over architecture. And seeing the golf course looking spectacular as expected, but simultaneously not its very best, was something else I believe the doctor ordered.

For those of you who abstain from social media, you are missing out four weeks a year (only three in 2020) when the majors are played. Golf/turf Twitter is an interesting place to hang out when the biggest prizes in golf are up for grabs. This November Masters was no different.

It started in September when pictures of a brown Augusta National surfaced on Instagram. Then, about three weeks later, it was green again. That’s the magic of Augusta National and perennial ryegrass. The Masters is played the second week of April because it is the optimum time of year for peak ryegrass, peak bentgrass performance, and peak spring blossoms and blooms.

The folks at Augusta National could have easily canceled this year’s tournament and not permitted a glimpse behind the curtain at a time of year when things are not yet up to typical Masters standards. But thank goodness they did not. Kudos to chairman Fred Ridley and the Augusta National membership for allowing the world to see the work of Brad Owen and his amazing staff and team of volunteers this year. We needed it.

Granted, no one would have predicted the first day of the tournament would be

interrupted for three hours as tropical moisture from a storm named Eta would collide with an approaching cold front to kick off a torrential line of downpours in mid-November. But, hey, it’s 2020! That same line of storms hit my hometown of Charlotte, North Carolina, later that same morning, kicking off widespread flash flooding and setting a record for one-day rainfall. We saw 4.28 inches at Carolina Golf Club. “Good grief!”

So, the overseed at Augusta National was still juvenile, the warm fall temperatures kept the base Bermudagrass actively growing and areas of the course experiencing the severest of shade showed the signs of less than perfection. And not one player complained.


Personally, I thought the fact the overseed was thin in places and the 12th green was starving for sunlight showed the golfing world that the perfection we’re accustomed to in spring does not exist 52 weeks a year, and hopefully that in turn is a good thing.

Golfer expectations are a widely discussed topic in our world, and the conversation is rarely if ever positive. And Augusta National is widely criticized each year for creating the unrealistic expectations the rest of us try and live up to. Heck, it has even been named Augusta Syndrome by some.

But in this year of all years, we saw an Augusta National on a global stage unlike we have seen her in decades. I believe it was just what the doctor ordered. **GCI**



MATTHEW WHARTON, CGCS, MG, is the superintendent at Carolina Golf Club in Charlotte, North Carolina and past president of the Carolinas GCSCA. Follow him on Twitter @CGCGreenkeeper.



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