

registered to control a broad spectrum of turf diseases, including dollar spot, summer patch and take-all patch.

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power recently hosted a backyard party in Manassas, Va., for Tony Moore, superintendent of Pohick Bay Golf Course. At this year's GCSAA Show, Moore registered for the Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power-hosted Big Block party for 25 to 35 of his friends, colleagues, customers and neighbors. To celebrate the launch of the Vanguard V-twin Big Block air-cooled and liquid-cooled engines in the 25- to 35-hp range, Briggs & Stratton gave away the party that included complimentary food and prizes, including merchandise and a pressure washer.

Golf Ventures West, a distributor of agronomic supplies and golf course equipment, opened its fifth location, which is in San Diego.

International Turf Producers Foundation raised more than \$37,000 to help support turfgrass research as a result of the "Pull for ITPF Tractor Sweepstakes" at the Turfgrass Producers International summer convention and field days in Harrisburg, Pa. At the convention, Leo Shelton of JMC Landscape Co. in Excelsior, Mo., won the grand prize, which was a 2004 New Holland TN75SA deluxe utility turf special tractor.

Jacobsen updated its brand identity with a new logo, a more aggressive corporate philosophy, dealer-support materials, and a Web-site redesign that conveys the brand's heritage and turf equipment, as well as its financial services and customer support. The logo features the Jacobsen name and a stylized blade of grass that have been incorporated into a badge with a three-dimensional effect. Dealer-support materials include print ads, equipment collateral and billboards.

Lange Containment Systems, a manufacturer of geosynthetic membranes, celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

LESCO opened a new service center in Roseville, Calif. The location is the company's seventh service center in California and the second one opened this year.

Stanton, Calif.-based **Melco Linings** joined the **PVC Geomembrane Institute** as a fabricator/installer member. Melco

Linings fabricates PVC products.

PFG Golf Finance, a division of Information Leasing Corp., changed its name to **National City Golf Finance**, a division of National City Commercial Capital Corp. The name reflects the combination of the company's parent company's leasing group: Provident Financial Group and National City Corp. The merger of Provident and National City closed July 1. Chris L. Schauerman will remain vice president of National City Golf.

The Tensar Corp. acquired **North American Green**. The deal was finalized Sept. 24. North American Green's rolled erosion-control products mesh with Tensar's geogrids and Geopier foundation systems, both of which provide site development soil reinforcement solutions. Through the partnership and its complementary product line, customers will be able to take advantage of streamlined project design and product specification services.

Players Turf International completed the installation of its synthetic tee line at the driving range at the University of Florida Golf Course. Perfect Tee is synthetic turf that was introduced at the 2004 PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, Fla. The University of Florida project included the installation of 1,200 square feet of tee line, consisting of a 100-foot-by-12-foot area.

The company also launched its PGA Referral Program that allows PGA professionals to earn extra income while introducing their members to synthetic putting greens. The company will provide marketing materials at golf courses and training facilities. It also is launching a section on its Web site designed to assist PGA members who implement the program at their facility. The company will pay a referral fee of \$0.25 per square foot up to a maximum of \$500 per installation to the referring PGA professional. The company also will pay a monetary benefit per successful referral for supporting the program for its members to the referring professional's PGA Section.

Personnel news

John LeClair, superintendent at Warwick Country Club in North Attleboro, Mass., became a certified golf course superintendent designated by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Henry Delozier, vice president of golf for Pulte Homes, was elected president of the Cactus and Pine Foundation at its annual meeting. The foundation is a 501 C 3 not-for-profit organization that supports turfgrass research and scholarships through golf events, grants and personal solicitations. Evie Hill, founder of the Ladybug Charity Golf Tournament, was elected vice president and **David Weinecke**, regional agronomist for the USGA, was elected secretary. Dr. Paul Rowe, a member of the Arizona Country Club, and **Todd Huizinga**, director of golf at Stone Canyon Golf Club, are new board members.

Archie Lemon, director of golf operations for Burroughs & Chapin Golf Management, was elected president of the Myrtle Beach Area Golf Course Owners Association. Burroughs & Chapin owns or manages several Myrtle Beach golf courses, including Grande Dunes, Myrtlewood Golf Club, Pine Lakes International Country Club, Tidewater Golf Club, Farmstead Golf Links and Meadowlands Golf Club.



Lemon

Marsh Benson, senior director of golf course grounds at Augusta (Ga.) National Golf Club, will be presented with the 2004 Leo Feser Award Feb. 11, 2005, during the general session of the 2005 Golf Industry Show and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America education conference in Orlando, Feb. 7-12. The annual award honors the best superintendent-authored article published in *Golf Course Management*.

Tammie J. Woster is the food-and-beverage manager at Circling Raven Golf Club and Coeur d'Alene (Idaho) Casino Resort Hotel.

Art Campbell, owner of Rossville, Kan.-based Campbell Sod, became the 34th president of Turfgrass Producers International at the group's summer convention in Harrisburg, Pa. As president of the more than 1,100-member, not-for-profit trade association, Campbell will be responsible for the group's operations.



Campbell

Cranbury, N.J.-based Plant Food Company hired **Gregory R. Moore** as distributor sales manager.

Brigid Braun is the district sales manager for Florida and Georgia for Precision Laboratories. Braun, a certified golf course superintendent, will be responsible for the sales and marketing of the company's product line to the golf course, landscape, sports field and public grounds markets.

Charles Lewison, a certified golf course superintendent, joined Quality Golf as a senior consultant. Lewison will work with executive director Tony Taylor in all phases of the company's consulting operation throughout Asia.

Chuck Greif is the new business development manager for Rain Bird's golf irrigation business unit. Greif will be responsible for evaluating and developing new lines of business to add to the

company's golf product offerings.

Bryan Campbell is a new senior service technician for the Northeast region for Rain Bird. Campbell will be responsible for providing technical on-site service and support for all Rain Bird Golf customers located in the region. He will also provide technical training to company distributors, employees and customers. He also will help develop and grow new and existing service business.

Mike Redmond joined Reinders' turf division as a turf specialist and will help the company expand into the Minnesota market. Reinders is a Wisconsin-based distributor of commercial turf equipment, irrigation products, landscape supplies, and Morton water softening and ice control salt.

Michael J. Hoffman was elected president and chief operating officer of The Toro Co. Hoffman is a 27-year veteran with the

company. Most recently, he had been group vice president of the consumer, landscape contractor and international businesses. Kendrick B. Melrose will continue in his role as chief executive officer and chairman.



Hoffman

The Toro Co. appointed **Steve Stephens** director of marketing for its irrigation division. Stephens will develop and implement the strategic marketing plans for all irrigation division product lines.

After more than two decades of service, **Doug Fender**, executive director of Turfgrass Producers International, retired. During his tenure, the organization grew to 1,100 members in 40 countries. Fender also helped form the International Turf Producers Foundation. GCN

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Negative to positive

When something good happens, research shows that the average person will tell three others about his or her experience. But if something negative happens, he or she will complain about it to 29 others.

This is more than an observation about peoples' behavior. From a marketing perspective, this fact shows you that one of the best things you can get from a customer is a complaint. You want complaints because you want to stop the person complaining and prevent him or her from telling 29 people. Even better, one of the best things you can do to impact word of mouth is to turn the person complaining into a fan. You do that – whenever possible – by addressing the issue and making the person complaining happy.

One of the interesting things about a golf course is that the experience is multidimensional for the customer – what a golfer thinks about the course is affected by: the parking lot, the clubhouse, the pro shop, each hole played, the views, the speed of play, the condition of the golf carts, the attitudes of the employees, food and drinks, and more. With all this going on, it's hardly surprising that a golfer might find something he or she didn't like, but also some things that exceeded his or her expectations. Golf courses that identify the disappointment factors and do something about them raise the overall perception of the course.

A key to making this happen is to empower the superintendent and assistant superintendent to be able to respond to complaints on the spot and do whatever is practical to correct a problem or make the complainer happy. For example, if some customers are having a problem with their golf cart on the course, the superintendent can be notified by workers and order them a replacement cart right away, then give the golfers a free round or a free lunch in the clubhouse. This can be as simple as empowering the superintendent to jot a note on his or her business card, sign and date it, and then accept it in the pro shop or clubhouse.

The goal is to turn a negative into a positive as quickly as possible. Referring to our mathematical example, this means that the person now no longer complains to 29 friends, family members and employees where he or she works. The per-

son now praises you to at least three other people – and possibly more. Not a bad turnaround.

The key to this is to get complaints. One way to find out what people think is to give golfers an evaluation form that invites complaints. An example of what a card could look like is below.

A "did you notice" card

Notice that the sample card below does several things. First, it tells golfers about some improvements that have been made. Second, it tells them that you take their recreation and your job seriously. Third, it asks them, in a nonthreatening manner, to tell you what they didn't like.

Most superintendents will do the first two

Did you notice ...

Hope you notice the improvements to the bunkers on the 12th hole. We've (state some improvement here). We're constantly working to improve the course and your golfing experience, so we're very interested in your comments about the course conditions and things that could be improved.

How would you rate your golfing experience today, with one being poor and five being excellent?

1 2 3 4 5

Did your golfing experience meet or exceed your expectations?

1 2 3 4 5

What could we do to improve the course?

Did anything about the course disappoint you?

Thank you for your comments.
If you would like to talk to me
please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Jack Smith
Golf Course Superintendent

Your Golf Course

steps, but the third step is the critical one. No matter how busy you are, do you really want to let people's complaints go unnoticed and not be addressed?

Certainly, you cannot take care of every complaint or concern of which you're told. But even if something cannot be done to correct a complaint because of budget constraints or the like, you can listen, explain the situation and tell the person that you will pass his or her comment on to the green committee or the course owner or manager.

It all starts by asking for the negatives. To do this, print the "did you notice" cards every three months for a 10-day period (two weekends and one week in between to make sure you get a good sample of all golfers). If possible, include the most recent maintenance steps or course improvements. Print each survey on a different colored paper to help golfers recognize a new survey.

Place the cards in the pro shop, in the clubhouse and on golf carts. Have your starters hand them out and have someone ask for them when they come in off the course. As an incentive, offer golfers a free drink for completing one or put them in a daily drawing for a free round of golf or a \$25 gift certificate in the pro shop. You might be surprised at the information you get.

Can you take care of every complaint? Unfortunately, the answer is "no," but even in an extreme case, you can take some of the sting out of the person who is complaining.

One course that I worked with had a golfer who nicked up a new set of Big Bertha clubs. The soil on the course was rocky and the golfer's deep divots created speed grooves in the club heads. The golfer wrote a scathing letter to the course and complained to other golfers. The owner sent the golfer a nice shirt from the pro shop along with a note saying they were sorry about the damage to the clubs and that they hoped he would continue to golf there. The note and gift didn't resolve the golfer's problem, but even so, the gesture shows concern for his complaint.

Making the effort to do something at least shows you're listening, and that step alone can help reduce the tension and possibly get a dialog started. GCN



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing, Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. A former associate publisher for *Golf Week*, he can be reached at Jackbrennan@ij.net.



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

Cart path design

At one time, you've probably contemplated adding cart paths to your golf course. If you don't have them, you should because every new course I've built without them adds them within a year. But you shouldn't add them without a master plan, or if you're 99-percent sure no major greens, tees or bunkers will be moved or added, because your cart paths must be completely integrated with your design to work as intended.

The trick to laying out cart paths is to defeat the straight-line mentality by providing many equally attractive entrance and exit points. Golfers hit their shots in different directions, so unless you inadvertently limit their access from primary play locations to the cart paths, this isn't difficult. Nonetheless, all golfers eventually go to areas such as greens, landing areas and tees. That traffic increases your maintenance challenge.

While you can't eliminate problems, intelligent design minimizes them. Here are a few tips.

Strive for easy circulation first and concealment second. There's little sense in designing a path where no one drives. Of course, this doesn't mean running cart paths down the middle of the fairway.

Direct routes. Paths veering sideways more than forward invite shortcuts without blockage. Paths should be as direct as possible. If the next tee is right of the green, the path should be on that side.

Gentle curves fit the landscape, look better and drive easier. You should be able to drive your truck comfortably at 15 mph and at a minimum radius of 120 feet. Broad curves spread wear better. Sharp curves encourage narrow exit/entry points and often draw attention. Strive to create unencumbered, relatively level access equal to two feet per thousand rounds. Generally, one broad inside curve midway between the tee and fairway landing area or the landing area and green encourages a variety of entrance/exit points distributing traffic better.

Limit obstructions such as trees, mounds or bunkers between paths, tees, fairways or greens because they funnel traffic. If you want to hide a fairway path with an earth form, use a long, gentle ridge rather than a series of humps because carts will inevitably funnel through the valleys.

Remove trees if necessary to maintain minimum radii and keep tree trunks five

feet from the pavement to avoid cart dents and roots from damaging pavement.

Limit slopes to about 15 percent where practical and avoid steep drop-offs near the paths for safety.

Cross fairways if necessary, avoiding prime landing areas. This increases fairway accessibility and can usually be hidden.

Green-area paths should:

- Be located 40 feet to 60 feet from the green's edge. Any closer affects play and invites short-cutting inside the path.

- Have curbs at tees and greens to control traffic and avoid small pull-out areas that concentrate traffic. Pave the paths to 10 feet to 12 feet of the full length of the natural entry points.

- Enter near the back to move players ahead, minimizing delays.

- Avoid entry through main drainage ways, narrow mounds or to a small portion of the green.

Tee-area paths should:

- Be 25 feet to 40 feet from and parallel to the tee edge, making all areas equidistant and similarly sloped from the tee.

- Avoid narrow access routes and steps.

- Minimize visual distractions and avoid the line of play.

- Minimize vertical climb. If the tee is raised, raise the cart path.

- Extend a gentle curve well past normal exit points in partial cart paths areas because abrupt ends concentrate exiting traffic.

Fairway-area paths should be:

- 40 feet to 60 feet from the fairway at main entry points and further in other areas, blending convenience and concealment.

- On the right side of the fairway where possible.

- On the side with the fewest obstructions (bunkers, mounds, etc.).

- On the outside of doglegs out of play, unless they can be hidden on the inside.

- Shaded by trees between exit areas for concealment.

- Near fairway level to assure convenient access. Being slightly above the fairway allows golfers to see their balls from the cart, quickening play.

- Routed away from dangerous areas such as high-play zones of adjacent holes and

hazards such as steep drop-offs.

Conceal paths by:

- Shading them with trees.

- Tilting them away from view lines and/or using low ridges to hide them in open areas. It's often easier to conceal a path crossing the fairway than one paralleling the line of play.

Where cart paths must be visible, avoid sharp vertical and horizontal alignments for best appearance. Because many golfers will travel the route, it should feature views of natural highlights such as trees, waterfalls, rock outcroppings or landscaped areas.

You also should use high quality construction materials, adequate pavement thickness with reinforcement and proper expansion/contraction joints. Concrete might be more expensive than asphalt, but it lasts longer and requires less maintenance.

And don't forget drainage. Many courses retrofitting with paths inadvertently block drainage patterns, but building paths with swales and drainage inlets on either side avoids this. Don't use paths as drainage ways because wet pavement isn't as safe and drainage accelerates, causing erosion at exit points. If necessary, use catch basins in the pavement with curbing to trap water. Remember to handle drainage well away from heavy traffic areas such as greens and tees.

You can further aid agronomic impacts of carts by:

- Routing cart paths on the south and/or east sides of fairways, tees and greens in wooded areas,

allowing morning sunlight to reach these areas.

- Using green-to-tee cart paths through wooded areas as wind slots by aligning them with breezes to provide air circulation.

Make sure your irrigation system favors the cart path side of the fairway. Insufficient irrigation combined with the stress of additional cart traffic will kill turf quickly.

If you're contemplating additions to your course, these basic guidelines will give you a good start. The most convenient route might also pose some safety problems, especially at older courses where cart paths were never contemplated during routing design and hole spacing. Use these general guidelines and common sense to determine your best cart path routing. GCN

STRIVE TO CREATE UNENCUMBERED, RELATIVELY LEVEL ACCESS EQUAL TO TWO FEET PER THOUSAND ROUNDS.

Career Web sites

My column in the September issue of *Golf Course News* introduced the concept of the golf course superintendent (and the other professionals in golf as well) committing to the development of a personal career Web site. Since then, I have received calls and e-mails asking how this might be done and at what cost. So, I will address these questions.

Web-site counseling is available via the Internet and professional consulting services. Enterprising superintendents can develop their own Web site at almost no cost. This possibility should be explored for its educational value before seeking professional assistance.

Because of the technical nature of superintendents' work, they should be prepared to write a sizable portion of the Web-site text after a consultant organizes and formats the Web site. A solid, representative Web site can be developed for about \$500. More sophisticated Web sites can cost as much as several thousand dollars.

A student Web site

This is for students seeking assistant jobs. The later college years present the first opportunity for career-minded students to commit to the preparation of a Web site because the development of one's life track record is well under way at this time. Accordingly, a student Web site might focus on:

- A consolidated, high-school profile listing noteworthy grades, honors, elected positions, projects undertaken, writings, jobs, hobbies, golf participation, level of computer literacy and community service.
- An expanded profile of the student's college years focusing on and further developing the same items listed within the high-school profile, but putting added emphasis on: (a) the quality of school attended; (b) the specific degree earned; and (c) situations that present the student as a person taking initiative and assuming leadership roles.

An effective, personal Web site will present students as unique job applicants instead of being viewed as one of many uncredentialed candidates applying for an assistant position. Web-site-bearing candidates will draw attention and practically assure themselves an interview, which is the name of the game at every employment level.

An assistant Web site

This is for assistants seeking superintendent jobs or better assistant jobs. The assistant Web site isn't intended to be a new, start-over Web site; rather, it should be a continuing extension of the student Web site that strategically expands on the activities initially presented. However, it would be appropriate to convert the student Web site to a link within the assistant Web site so viewers will be able to focus on an assistant's current work product better.

With this housework completed, specific notice should be given to the following:

- A concise expression of the assistant's career-mission statement.
- A profile of the club(s) and/or course(s) where the assistant has worked, which should include: private versus public status, grass types, number of rounds per year, totals of operating and capital budgets (if public knowledge), noteworthy tournaments hosted, and a mini-profile of the superintendent's credentials.
- A profile of the assistant's job description for each job held, any titles earned, and positions within chains of command.
- Special assignments and projects undertaken by the assistant and what role was filled within these assignments. Digital photographs should illustrate special projects completed.
- A listing of industry-related seminars and workshops attended, as well as a list of the textbooks, videocassettes and CDs collected within the assistant's personal library.
- What commitment has been made to continuing education.

Clearly, the more initiative assistants take with their careers, the better the Web site will reflect a creative maturing professional.

A superintendent Web site

This is for superintendents seeking to advance their careers via better job opportunities. Again, the earlier practice of continuing and extending the information presented within earlier Web sites should continue, with the assistant Web site being converted to a link within this process.

The primary purpose of developing a personal Web site at this point in a career is to definitively present what impact superintendents have had on golf courses and properties they've accepted responsibility for when starting each job.

Accordingly, this Web site should focus

on a combination of following: the superintendent's approach to and results with general management, crew training and safety, efficient budget management, computer systems and record keeping, expanding commitments to playing golf and the Rules of golf, where assistants have found worthy jobs, family status, and off-season priorities.

This is the most critical Web site within an advancing superintendent's career. A Web site that concisely reflects decisive decision-making and planning in the pursuit of excellence will open the door for job advancement.

A veteran Web site

This is for more experienced superintendents looking to secure present jobs and for those seeking job advancement. Because the most constant challenge to experienced superintendents' job security is their higher salaries when good, lower-salaried superintendents are available, it's imperative veteran superintendents clearly demonstrate that their general-management style and highly efficient, budget-management practices (using computer graphics appropriately) will save much more money than their salary increment will cost each year.

Accordingly, this continuing Web site should artfully show, among other things, that superintendents remain completely active in their jobs and that no one else is a more efficient manager of the sizable amounts of money committed to the maintenance program each year.

Enlightening Web sites can save veterans' jobs and present superintendents in such a renewed light that they will be looked at as invaluable assets to current and prospective employers.

Superintendents developing personal Web sites for the first time relatively late in a career should prepare student and assistant links as profiled above.

Never in the employment history of the golf industry has a professional had a better opportunity to present credentials more effectively on a better stage than now via a personal Web site.

As the invention of the wheel changed the way the world operated, so too will the use of personal Web sites change the way the employment world functions in golf. The era of overloading resumes is over. GCN



Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf, a golf course development and consulting firm (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com) and is a former executive director of GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@adelphia.net.

Three's company

TEAMWORK, UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT ARE NEEDED AMONG SUPERINTENDENTS, GENERAL MANAGERS AND GOLF PROFESSIONALS FOR MANAGEMENT TO WORK BEST

by
JOHN
WALSH

Q How many superintendents are at a facility with a general manager and a golf professional?

Typically, if there's a general manager, it's a private club or a resort course or something like that. Maybe half the clubs in the country – or maybe 5,000 or 6,000 clubs – are set up in that situation.

You get two different systems: the triumvirate management system and the g.m./chief operating officer concept. Most municipalities and the ma-and-pa courses don't fit that type of system, so you have to rule most of those out.

Then there are some courses that have the director-of-golf concept, which is usually the golf professional as his supervisor. It's not always like that, but he has supervision over the golf course as a part of his duty in some cases. In California, the g.m. system is the majority. Coming from Chicago, it's the minority there – more of them would be in the triumvirate management system.

Q In that system, who answers to whom?

In a true g.m. concept – and that's a problem: Some of these are quasi-g.m. concepts – there's no question in the organizational chart that the g.m. runs the business as the c.o.o. or chief executive officer, and the superintendent and golf professional typically report to him. In a quasi-g.m. concept, sometimes a person has a g.m. title by name but not necessarily by responsibility, and then the superintendent or professional might report to the board or to committees.

Q Is the industry experiencing more of the quasi-setup?

It appears more organizations are moving toward a true g.m. concept rather than some form of it.

Q To make the business structure more clear?

Usually, you have a president of a company or a c.o.o. or whatever the title might be, and we all report to somebody. So no matter what structure you work in, a golf course superin-

tenant ultimately reports to a green committee, a board of directors or a g.m., and in some cases, a director of golf.

Q Because there's a superintendent, g.m. and pro at many facilities, is there a power struggle among them? And is there a perception that the three don't get along?

The key word is 'can.' There can be. It's just like you can have a happy marriage, and you can have an unhappy marriage. Many times, the choice is yours, and if there are struggles, they typically exist because there's a lack of mutual respect among one another.

I've taught seminars for years for the PGA of America, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Club Managers Association of America, and one of the things I like to key in on is the importance of mutual respect for a team to work together. I need to appreciate the roles the golf professional and g.m. play, as well as understand their challenges and what's going to make them successful. I need to put myself in the position that I can try to contribute to things that are going to make them successful, and, in turn, they're going to operate the same way with me. For example, when it rains in Southern California and I haven't had rain in five months, I'm a pretty happy guy. But how happy is the golf professional? He has to cancel his lessons that day. Different things make us happy, but we have to appreciate what's good for the other person.

Q Because everything is linked together?

Everything is linked together, and where some people lose sight – and you hope they never do – is success of the operation, not the individual. Golf is a business. It's a sport, but it's a business. And unless you're able to run the numbers through a golf facility – keeping carts running the number of days you need to, serving what you have forecasted in terms of meals and beverages – to generate the revenue you need, it takes everybody working together to make that happen.

Q So the big picture and working as a team are important?

That's right. But I don't want to paint this picture because someone will say, "That's not my golf course." So I have to say that with a caveat. In some cases, superintendents have been satisfied staying in the distinct area of the golf course and golf course maintenance.

The superintendent that will fair well in the future will have a much improved understanding of how the total business runs. When I say that – knowing what membership numbers are and how many years of a waiting list there is, knowing what the cash flow of the operation is, knowing the challenges they have in scheduling events and understanding all the different aspects at many places – it's the superintendent who only takes care of the golf course and is unaware of some of those other areas who will fall behind. So when a business, especially a golf course, is being challenged financially, a typical thing is to reduce expenses and increase revenues. We can be a part of that, and we can assist in that area if we have a pretty good understanding of it.

Q Are you saying the perception of the three not getting along depends on the course?

When I assisted the PGA with a golf course operations manual, I tried to say that it goes back to mutual respect. We have different roles, and we have to understand that we serve at different capacities, but the end product is a result of different ways that we are approaching and attacking things.

What makes me happy? Having only 20 players a day or being closed on a Monday – those things are good for superintendents because they're good for turf. But what good is that if you can't pay the bills at the end of the month? I used to caution some of the young apprentices that would work for me, and they would say, "We could get something done if it wasn't for all of the damn players out here," and I said, "Kiss the ground those players walk on because if it wasn't for all of those players, we wouldn't get a paycheck every two weeks." You have to understand that we're not just an expense area in a business, we are a revenue generator by producing good,

GOLF COURSE NEWS
INTERVIEWS BRUCE
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GOLF COURSE
SUPERINTENDENT OF
THE LOS ANGELES
COUNTRY CLUB



Photo: Bruce Moir Photography

quality conditions and how that fits in the overall picture of the club budget versus the golf course maintenance budget.

Back to the point. It's almost like a marriage. When you find two people that have the most blissful, wonderful marriage, it doesn't get any better than that. The same thing is true with the professional/manager/superintendent relationship. But when you find one that's bad, there's no fixing it.

can I do to make your job easier?" it might turn the tables around.

Q What would be the ideal relationship between the three?

The ideal relationship is a clearly designated chain of command. So, do I report to three different people, do I report to one person? Does everything flow through the g.m. and back to my peer? For example, if I need to

and talk to people. Those are important.

One of the things we do at our club is bowl together once a week – the golf pro, the g.m. and myself. That's says a lot to build personal relationships that are outside of the business. I've got a new g.m. who came here about eight months ago. But prior to that, our other one was here for 35 years, and we tried to play the golf course together once a week.

I'll add the caveat I give when teaching seminars: If you go out to play golf with your superintendent, g.m. or director of golf, and for 18 holes, you show them everything that's wrong, they're going to be busy next time you want to play. If you go out and enjoy yourself, perhaps when you get done, later that day or the next day, say, "Hey Fred, when we were out there playing there's a couple of things that I noticed. Help me understand these things." Part of it isn't what we say, but how we say it.

"People should get off the idea of who is more important and who's worth more. For an operation to succeed, everyone must work together."

Q And that stems from one or two of the three not understanding the big picture and not having respect for the others?

Well, usually it's a lack of respect – that's a part of it. Other things that breed contempt are territorialism – when people say things like, "It's not my job," "It's only me," "That's your problem not my problem."

Q What advice would you give to superintendents about understanding the big picture and respecting the g.m. and pro?

Before becoming superintendents, people should spend a couple weeks in other people's shoes. They should see if they can work in the food-and-beverage center and in the pro shop to understand what the people talk about when they have complaints about the golf course. They should understand what it's like before a shotgun start from the golf professional's eyes.

I was fortunate. I started as a caddy, worked for a golf professional for three or four years, and worked with soft goods merchandising and dealt with customers. Then I worked for a superintendent who was a g.m., who said, "You need to get inside and see the food-and-beverage side of things." So I worked on the golf course for four or five hours, then I went in and was a waiter during lunch, and I went back out on the golf course when I was done.

So anybody who gets a broad scope of things, it's going to be extremely beneficial to them in their career. That's good when you're 21, but what do you do when you're 25 or 30 while you're a superintendent and you get into relationships? Walk a mile in another man's shoes. Try and figure out his challenges. If there's no communication, you're never going to find out. But, if you ask questions like, "What can I do to assist you?" and "What

have something done through the pro, do I work with him, or does it flow back to the g.m. and the g.m. gives the directive? I'm not saying one system is going to work better than another, but understand the system.

Certainly, a second feature is communication. The worse case scenarios are the water-cooler meetings in which I see the pro or manager everyday for about five minutes and have a cup of coffee together. The organizations that I've been involved with and serve better have normal meetings and agendas. For example, when a tournament is coming up, a prospectus should let everybody know what role they play, so everybody knows what each person is doing.

Q Do superintendents not get the credit they deserve many times because the pro and g.m. have more visibility to the public?

Yes, but sometimes it's their own fault. For years, the GCSAA has had an image campaign, and it talks about public relations. There's a feeling that the association is going to solve that for the member. The reality is the association can only put the tools in superintendents' hands, and then they have to have their own grassroots public relations campaign. So whether it's getting your name on the scorecard at a new golf facility, addressing the ladies about the flowers on the golf course or attending the men's scratch league to discuss green speed, you've got to develop your own public relations program. And there's nothing wrong with spending time around the first tee after a shotgun start. You have to make your own opportunity and capitalize on it.

There's a lot of guys that do it well, but as a whole, more people need to do that. Some do it by playing golf with members, some do it by dining or having lunch at the snack bar or grill. You have to be able to field questions

Q Do one of these three tend to stay longer at a course? And how does that relate to their relationship if somebody new arrives?

The average tenure at a club for a manager is about three years; for a superintendent, it's about seven years; and for a golf professional, it's about five years. Why is it that way? Well, in some cases, the superintendent can be the one with the most experience at a club, and that has its good and bad sides. He's an established person there – that can be a good thing, but it can be a threat to some people. I can't imagine it being a threat, but a small thinker could think it's a threat. Somebody that has 150 acres to manage and knows it like the back of his hand is nothing but a benefit.

Q You mentioned the g.m. What's his name?

Our new g.m. is Kirk Reese, and the pro's name is Jim Schaeffer.

Q What's your relationship with them?

I'm in one of those marriages that's blissful – it doesn't get any better than this. That's the kind of guys I'm working with. It hasn't always been that way in my career, but where I'm at right now, it's extremely blissful. They are great guys to work with – they're professional. We work hard, produce an excellent product and do it with teamwork. As I mentioned earlier, I bowl with these fellas. We've gone on golf junkets together, play golf together and eat lunch together. When you're spending more time with the people you work with than you probably are with your family, which is not uncommon in this business, you have to work together and get along.

Q What's the structure like?

We are in a true g.m. concept. I report to the g.m., and the g.m. reports to the board of the directors. I don't report to a green committee. But where I came from, in Chicago, I reported to the green committee chairman and the board of the directors. The manager was a clubhouse manager, and he just oversaw the food and beverage.

Q What at your old job wasn't as good as what you have now?

Let's not speak about the downside of the old job, let's speak to the upside of this job that I've had for 7½ years. We don't miss a beat in the formality, planning and organization of what we do. Everything flows through the g.m., who goes over all of the details that need to be taken care of for every function. Not on a day-to-day basis because people run their own functions, but when it comes to the big events, we'll have a meeting with all of the department heads and sign off on everything. The formality of the organization is fantastic. I love working in that environment.

Q Is it easier for a superintendent to do his job when there's a structure with a g.m. and pro, or is it easier when a superintendent is doing his own thing?

Every course is different. I'll give you an example. I worked for Frank Dobie at The Sharon (Ohio) Golf Club. He's a nice guy and one of my mentors. He's a g.m. at a club that only serves lunch, not dinner. They do most of their golf six months out of the year. He's a g.m./superintendent, and that's the right fit for that club. They don't have a swimming pool or tennis courts. All they have is golf. They are getting two for one: One guy overseeing both jobs, and that's great.

When you end up with operations that have a small golf shop and a snack bar or grill rather than a full-service restaurant with 1,500 covers on a busy day, they might have a different fit. When you have something that has an independent food-and-beverage operation that's profitable, obviously you have to have greater structure.

Q So basically, the larger the facility, the larger the operation and the more likely you are to have a three-tiered management?

Yes, and I'm not an advocate of one or the other. First of all, when you get hired somewhere, you don't have a lot of choices to decide the governing system. But you have a choice to change, if necessary, to fit into that governance model. I come from a triumvirate management system, and I can say, "This

will never work, I don't like it, I don't know why I have to do this." But you shouldn't go there if you can't make that adjustment.

Q So you have to be flexible and fit into different structures?

Right. We each have our roles. Part of my role in the g.m. concept is to provide a strong department and a good product and try to make my boss look good.

Q What about salary? From what I understand, in years past, the g.m. always made more money than the superintendent, but now the superintendent is coming up to parity with the g.m., if not, in some instances, making more.

It can go a couple ways. If someone is a true g.m., that person should be compensated at a higher level than the superintendent. That's not my opinion, that's just how business operates. The person at the higher end of the organizational chart has more responsibility and more people reporting to him because they're overseeing not just the golf course, but food and beverage and everything else. So, it's logical that they are compensated accordingly. Many people wouldn't debate that. When you get into the triumvirate management system, sometimes there's disagreements about how people are compensated. Everyone thinks their turf or area is the most important part of the job. Some of it has to do with longevity of the job, but I know more than a few cases where superintendents make more than their counterparts at a golf facility.

For example, I know some superintendents that make more than the professionals they work with. I know superintendents that make more than the clubhouse managers that they work with. Is that the majority? No. It's not so much about making more, it's more about some level of parity and trying to be compensated for what the standard is and the norm in your area. What's the going rate for a golf pro in a city like Chicago? Well, if you want to hire one, you're going to see what they're paying at other clubs—same thing with a superintendent or g.m. The histories show that at least the majority of g.m.s are paid more than the superintendents, but the gap between the two of them isn't that big.

Q Does it go back to respect of the g.m. knowing how much the superintendent makes, and the g.m. being able to understand that even though he makes more, the salaries might be fairly close?

I'd hope my peers would be happy if they're working for a g.m. where he or she is fairly

compensated and not worry so much about being even with them, but working for an organization that does its homework to make sure people are compensated fairly. No matter which way we look at it, some people might squabble and say, "How come so and so is making more than I am?" Don't worry about other people, worry about your own situation. If someone else in the organization, whether it be a golf professional or g.m., is making more than you, you can look at it as either the cup being half empty or half full. I'm happy if the g.m. or pro is compensated fairly because that means that I'm working for people that are going to compensate me fairly. Don't worry about what they get, take care of yourself.

Q Do you attend board meetings? Are superintendents a part of board meetings more, and if so, how are g.m.s reacting to that?

I don't attend board meetings, but I attended every board meeting at my prior job. It's a different way of looking at things. The minutes of the green committee meetings, which I attend, are forwarded and are dealt with at the board level. So the g.m. speaks for the organization and my department at the board level. I'm comfortable with the former and the current g.m.s carrying our message properly. But I have seen more superintendents in the triumvirate management system attending board meetings than I did 20 years ago.

Many successful clubs share their financial information with the golf course superintendent and other department heads on a month-to-month basis to show the direction the business is going. You can't take golf course maintenance and do it independently without seeing how it fits into the bigger picture.

Q Anything else that's important?

People should get off the idea of who's more important and who's worth more. For an operation to succeed, everyone must work together. You can't have a food-and-beverage operation that doesn't get along and communicate well with the golf course maintenance operation. I can guarantee that if you're at a club and the pro, superintendent and g.m. don't get along, one or more of them will be gone. And why does it have to be that way? For you to work well with your fellow people, you have to make them want to be successful. So, if there's jealousy, animosity or contempt, it's probably not going to work. GCN

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The future course

GOLF COURSE DESIGN CHANGES REFLECT MARKET DEMANDS AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

by
JOHN
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Golf course design changes during the next five to 10 years might not be drastic, but there will be changes that will affect superintendents' approaches to maintenance and their budgets. Shorter courses, fewer bunkers and narrower fairways might be some of the changes that occur, in addition to updated greens and tees. But no matter what the changes, golf course conditions will continue to improve.

Brad Kocher, senior vice president of golf course management for ClubCorp and v.p. of grounds and golf course management at Pinehurst Resort in N.C., says the industry

will continue to push to have the fewest amount of acres and still have nice courses.

"Fewer acres of golf course mean less maintenance, chemicals and water," Kocher says. "A golf course that uses 200 acres – you won't see that that often."

Bill Love, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, agrees with Kocher and says the industry will focus on resource conservation when developing courses.

"It's important now, but were refining it," Love says. "There's more design with resource conservation in mind. But the biggest thing to deal with is to reduce the area and adjust to

new technology with equipment. When designing golf courses, we need to make it easier and cheaper to maintain them."

Locations

Recently, there's been a trend of developers building courses in residential communities, and that's expected to continue.

"Most of those courses are financially productive," Kocher says. "The best return on investment is when 18 holes are tied to residential real estate."

Love says architects should look at how they approach residential golf courses.

Golfers would like to see fairways become wider to accommodate their drives. However, wider fairways are more expensive to maintain, and some superintendents are under pressure to narrow them.

Usually, there are between four and six tees boxes on a golf course. This is a result of golfers hitting balls farther and to accommodate golfers with different skill levels. It also gives a course diversity and excitement.

