

# Cooperative efforts

**G**olf course superintendents are known for sharing information freely and providing hands-on help sometimes. It's one of the great things about the profession. My contention is the vast majority of superintendents – and golf course owners and managers – fail to think creatively enough about ways to work together. The common denominator when brainstorming about how you might be able to work with your neighbors is to ask the question: "What's good for us – not just you or me?"

One of the strongest examples of cooperation took place in the mid-1990s in the Orlando area. Four courses, all located on what's called The Ridge area, shared a common problem. They are located near Disney World, but on the wrong side of Disney, in an area that, in 1993, was relatively undeveloped.

The four courses are Ridgewood Lakes, Southern Dunes, Diamondback and the Grenelefe Resort (which has three courses). The facilities are within a 15-mile distance of each other in an area, which then, was part of a new development. They were head-to-head competitors in the middle of nowhere, as perceived by the metropolitan Orlando market and the eastern New Tampa, Plant City and Lakeland markets.

Despite being relatively close together, their main competition was the more established areas in and around Orlando, and to a degree, the eastern part of Tampa. I wrote a plan for the four to work together and attract players. My analysis was that The Ridge courses were prime for discovery by golfers. In fact, we were able to use the reputation of Grenelefe Resort (PGA Tour qualifying held annually at the West Course) as a means to elevate the desirability of the other new courses. As a golfer, it was easy to get on the courses because they weren't crowded.

The four courses agreed to work together to promote golf on The Ridge. The target market was golfers in the metropolitan Orlando area.

The first suggestion of cooperative marketing came from the v.p. of operations or c.e.o., but it easily could have come from superintendents thinking outside the box. They know their products and their competitive strengths. In marketing, the first major competitive advantage is

location. So, what happens when a course fails to have a location advantage? You create your own competitive advantage. In this case, we were able to use a portion of the four facilities' advertising budgets to generate awareness of the area's created competitive advantage.

## Create you own advantage

In Al Reis' and Jack Trout's book, "The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing," the first immutable law is leadership. Be a leader. Create a category of business in which you can be first. Their book states: "It's better to be first than it is to be better. It's much easier to get into the mind first than to try to convince someone you have a better product than the one that got there first." The question they ask to illustrate this point is: Who was first to fly over the Atlantic Ocean solo? Answer: Charles Lindbergh. Now, who was second? I'll bet there are few people reading this column that thought of the name Bert Hinkler. And did you know that Hinkler was considered the better pilot?

With Lindbergh holding the title of leader or first in this category, how does someone compete? According to Reis and Trout, if you can't be first in a category, then create a category in which you can be first (the law of category, immutable law No. 2). Example: What's the name of the third person to fly solo over the Atlantic Ocean? If you didn't know that Hinkler was the second person to fly over the Atlantic you might think you had no chance to know the name of the third person. But you do. It was Amelia Earhart. Now, was Earhart known as the third person to fly solo over the Atlantic Ocean, or as the first woman to do so? She created her own category in which to be first.

We took this approach for The Ridge courses. During the winter, the in-season in Florida, every day in Central Florida is a Saturday as it relates to play levels. Courses are at or near capacity, even on The Ridge. The troubling season is summer. And part of that trouble was caused by the sometimes torrential rains in Florida. They might last a relatively short while, but they can flood a course with

poor drainage and make it unplayable even though the sun is shining. That was a rare occurrence on The Ridge because it enjoyed a higher elevation and faster drainage. We took advantage of this fact in the joint marketing effort. We created a new category in which the courses could be leaders – "When it rains, play The Ridge. We're open." As a result, the four courses enjoyed stronger summer play in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

## Come together

Golf courses compete for players, and one part of that competition is attracting core players to your course and earning their steady business. Another part is to get new people to play.

Alliances are one marketing approach to consider, but the marketing concept has to make sense, and it has to stand out from the competition. Doing what everyone else is doing can create a lose-lose situation. The Orlando market fees of \$25 to \$29 per round common in the area mean no one is making money. Some courses worked with hotel employees to pass out discount coupons to attract more golfers during the off-season. It worked for a while, but now coupons and rebates are common, and they're passed out year-round. In short, everyone's losing.

Still, opportunities abound in golf for alliances. Superintendents can work with other superintendents. General managers can work with other general managers. The common areas for an alliance include maintenance, attracting employees, buying products, training and increasing play by attracting new players. And you don't have to align yourself with only your competitive counterparts. By thinking creatively, it's possible to generate ideas that help your course as part of a cooperative effort.

This works. Four years ago, I helped found Golf Course Business Consultants. It's an incorporated affiliation of 15 industry consultants and service providers who work cooperatively to provide owners and general managers with expert advice. It's a situation in which everyone gains ... and that's smart marketing. GCN



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# Maintenance in mind

“How does maintenance affect design?” This is an often asked, but not new, question. Golf course architecture articles in the 1960s usually mentioned the design triangle of aesthetics, playability and maintenance, and cautioned about the necessity of designing for maintenance.

In 1977, I was an apprentice at a firm specializing in municipal golf course design and cost-effective renovations. Usually clients weren't flush with cash, so the firm's design triangle wasn't an equilateral triangle. It leaned heavily to the maintenance side.

I, and many others, felt the era of great design was over, and pure design would never rise again because the economics of golf were the most important consideration. Golf courses have never been pure art because they have a business side.

The Reagan/Clinton years reversed that long-standing trend and proved me wrong. A growing game and a healthy economy provided most courses enough cash to go beyond the basics of design for maintenance. Emphasis changed to the spectacular and perfectly maintained courses. Many great courses were designed, and their maintenance made them even better. The longest side of the triangle was the aesthetics side, and many courses accepted the additional maintenance costs associated with these features.

However, golf course design in the '20s, '80s and '90s involved short-sightedness because the industry forgot it goes through economic downcycles, proven by the depression and the recession that partly stemmed from 9/11. As maintenance costs escalate because of inflation, and courses have trouble finding more new players or charging existing ones more to cover costs, architectural features will continue to suffer because economics dictates doing what's necessary to survive. In this case, it's the money, not the principle.

I see club management and superintendents asking hard questions about design and maintenance. I see the triangle restoring itself more equilaterally. Golf course architects and superintendents are finding ways to do more with less, including altering golf design features to ease maintenance.

Practicality will prevail for the next several years. If no one has played from

a bunker in recent memory, why spend money maintaining it? While a bunker might provide beauty, beauty doesn't appear on the balance sheets. Most courses will be built – or rebuilt – with profit and practicality in mind. Design features will be scrutinized closely again to see how much they contribute to play and reduce maintenance or speed of play. Inefficient features that don't serve many functions won't survive in many places. Courses might experience the following:

- 1980s- and '90s-style mounding should vanish because of mowing production and reduced water consumption.

- Greens will become flatter in the middle to ease and speed putting, and on the edges to avoid those perimeters drying out. If one wants 6,500-square-foot greens, 6,500-square-foot greens will be built, not highly contoured 9,000-square-foot greens with the same cupping space as smaller ones.

- Green speeds should remain constant, but not reverse, for faster daily play. Faster green speeds will be reserved for special occasions.

- Tees will return to purely functional status. They'll be gently curved to fit the landscape and turning radius of mowers. Artistic free form and rectangular shapes that are hard to mow or that waste space will be gone.

- New tees will be built. Small ones will be tucked into the furthest pockets of the golf course to service the new generation of long hitters. Bigger ones will be built or expanded further up front so superintendents can move play forward on any busy day.

- Similarly, little touches such as elaborate tee landscaping will be reduced to clubhouse areas or clusters of tees.

- Tees with stair steps of tee height grass have been disappearing faster than suburban farm land. The 50 square feet of artistic, but highly maintained tees, will be deemed a waste of resources.

- Narrow fairways will remain in vogue because the money it takes to mow, water and spray, a 200-foot-wide fairway is too costly to provide a tee shot option that few understand and fewer actually use.

- Most holes with a second, strategic fairway will be reduce to one because of the theory that one fairway per hole is sufficient.

- Astute superintendents will contour mow fairways, leaving them wider within 250 yards off the tee to help average players quicken play.

- While fairways will narrow, play corridors might widen. Removing the innermost row of trees allows greater production in rough mowing and reduces the number of lost balls.

- Roughs will become shorter, typically only as deep as necessary to provide visual contrast to fairways.

- Bunkers might become as rare as the buffalo, and the number of bunkers might depend on how many can be raked before noon. Some sand bunkers will be converted to grass bunkers. There might be a trend toward bunkerless greens that are furthest from the maintenance area to reduce travel time.

- Bunkers also will be flatter to minimize sand washing because players want a perfect playing surface and superintendents hate the unscheduled maintenance after rainstorms.

These changes are much like responses to golf's economic situation in the 1930s and 1960s. However, quality expectations have improved too much to allow maintenance quality reduction. We won't go back to quarter-inch greens of the 1970s. Technologically superior grasses and mowers will allow better maintenance in less time, and course management technology, such as cart-based GPS units, will continue to speed play.

The bottom line of golf course design will be the bottom line. That's been true whether times are good and designs are extravagant, or the economy is poor and designs are practical. Perhaps the saddest part is that we forgot the lessons of the past. Although it's hard to predict the future, it's easy enough to know difficult economic times mean the maintenance side of the design triangle can never be ignored.

Design features that can't be maintained easily will be gone within a decade. I ask superintendents during construction how a feature affects their maintenance. Usually, they aren't bashful about telling me, and you shouldn't be bashful about discussing that with your architect either. After all, the goal of most renovations is to help maintenance costs without hurting the product. GCN



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We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at [www.golfcoursenews.com/forums](http://www.golfcoursenews.com/forums).



# Golf's driving engine

*[During my 25-plus-year career as a golf course developer and consultant, I've interviewed and specifically challenged the teaching techniques of more than 100 golf professionals and assistants applying for jobs with my firm's clients, and independently audited a similar number of private lessons and clinics.]*

The art and science of golf instruction should: bring waves of new players to the game, but doesn't; elevate the quality of play throughout the country, but doesn't; drive golf professionals' careers, but doesn't; and be universally respected as a unique discipline, but isn't.

The evidence to support these premises isn't difficult to find. For example, when I was serving as the executive director of the Metropolitan Golf Association during the 1970s, it generally was understood that there might be fewer than a dozen guaranteed effective golf instructors throughout the more than 400 golf courses in the New York Metro area — a situation that hasn't changed appreciably today.

Think about it. There are more than 26 million golfers throughout the country and, maybe, there are 1,000 or 2,000 guaranteed effective golf instructors. This translates to about one proven golf instructor for every 18,000 golfers. This is primarily why 3 million players leave golf every year. The industry is committed to bringing more players to golf, but not committed to bringing more and better teachers to the game. Do we not have the cart before the horse?

Without an increasing number of qualified golf instructors, player development will continue to stagnate ad infinitum. Generate the teachers, and the players will follow. How can this best be done?

## Redefine the job

The implied career job description of the golf professional should be restructured to reposition the responsibility for teaching the game as the primary objective throughout present and future generations of professionals' careers. Improved teaching will better the game and nurture a golf professional's career like nothing else. Respected teachers will always control their career destiny.

Once restructured, the golf professional's career mission statement would become a beacon for those expecting to pursue meaningful golf professional careers. With the beacon lighting the way, aspiring golf

professionals soon will learn that only by using better visual technology, teaching macroprinciples before microprinciples and by developing an absolute passion for teaching golf will they be able to develop the skills needed to become effective teachers.

## Schools present opportunity

It will take time for golf professionals to accept and grow into the practice of priority teaching. But can anything be done to speed the process? Fortunately, yes. As leading golf organizations are now saying, by focusing golf instruction on the millions of students within the country's school systems, both the player development process and the body of golf instruction would be quickly energized. Why? Because the excitement of filling new teaching jobs to bring the game of golf to a vast young and receptive audience would carry the day.

To confirm this premise, some enterprising/aspiring golf professionals are already preparing to gain access to the California school systems, i.e., preparing to be hired as PGA/LPGA qualified golf coaches in the same manner as football, basketball and baseball coaches are hired and retained. All fringe benefits, including tenure and pension programs that apply to state employed teachers, similarly would apply to golf coaches with classroom responsibility, or full-time instruction schedules.

Accordingly, it would be prudent for the PGA and LPGA to present workshops that would educate members and other interested parties (for a projected new school class of membership that would likely double overall PGA/LPGA memberships in the coming years) to the opportunities school systems present and the process of how to qualify for these evolving jobs through applications for state teaching licenses.

## A numbers game

Baseball is an example of one of several sports that produces almost unlimited statistics; i.e., batting averages, RBIs, ERAs, wins/loses, saves and the number of innings pitched are just a few. Baseball would never have earned its mantle as America's pastime without having taken full promotional advantage of the numbers it generates.

Golf is as much a numbers-generating game as baseball, football or basketball. Yet, it has done little, if anything, at the vast amateur level to take advantage of its

numerical environment. It's time for this to change.

## Data capture

The first thing golf would have to do is establish a mechanism to capture scoring and performance data. The individual player stat sheet on the facing page is a suggested approach to provide this capability.

Once in play, the stat sheet offers unlimited opportunity as to how it might be best used. For example, the stat sheet would be used within an interactive e-mail exchange network between golf instructors and their students who would input per round playing data for the instructor to analyze, respond to via e-mail and plan future lessons around.

Then, the fun really begins. Why couldn't golf clubs/courses generate top-five performance profiles (for each of the six player categories) from stat sheet data much in the same way, in part, as the PGA Tour does weekly and publish the results in their newsletters and/or Web sites? (Non-students could participate via a simplified data capture mechanism.) This focus would motivate players to improve their skills and spark more players to take instruction, while at the same time increasing the overall enjoyment of the game.

## Career promotion

Finally, we can't overlook how the use of the stat sheet would immeasurably advance the careers of golf instructors. As my November 2004 column suggested, golf course superintendents should develop personal career Web sites to better advance their careers. This concept also aptly applies to golf professionals' careers. A Web-site link would be the ideal way to present a professional's teaching credentials and success. Stat sheet data, supported by almost endless graphic possibilities (see two sample graphs on facing page), could be made to dance within Web site presentations.

The engine that will drive golf to realize its long-range goals is quality golf instruction because only better teaching will generate more players, which, in turn, will generate more rounds, greater merchandise sales, larger TV audiences and the development of more golf courses.

The good news is the opportunity to upgrade the quantity and quality of golf instruction is virtually unlimited. GCN



# Individual player stat sheet

|      |           |     |    |                       |          |         |     |    |      |   |
|------|-----------|-----|----|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----|----|------|---|
| Name | Bob Jones | Age | 28 | W<br>Tee: 6250<br>124 | GHIN No. | #675912 | YR: | 05 | M/F: | M |
|------|-----------|-----|----|-----------------------|----------|---------|-----|----|------|---|

| HOME SCORES   |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |               | AWAY      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
|---------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|------|-------------|------|
| Hole No.      | Par | Rd 1 | Rd 2 | Rd 3 | Rd 4 | Rd 5 | Rd 6 | Rd 7 | Rd 8 | Rd 9 | Rd 10 | Home Hole Ave | Par Diff. | Rank Hole Diff. | Best Score Year | Rd. | Date | Gross Score | CR   |
| Date>         |     | ju5  | ju8  | ju16 | ju23 | ju28 | ji2  | ji5  | ji8  |      |       |               |           |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| Confirm Tee > |     | W    | W    | W    | W    | W    | W    | W    | W    | W    |       |               |           |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| 1             | 5   | 6    | 5    | 6    | 5    | 7    | 6    | 5    | 6    | 5    |       | 5.67          | 0.67      | T10             | 5               |     |      |             |      |
| 2             | 4   | 5    | 7    | 4    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    |       | 5.11          | 1.11      | T2              | 4               | 1   | ju4  | 87          | 71.1 |
| 3             | 4   | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 5    | 4    | 4    | 6    |       | 4.33          | 0.33      | T14             | 4               | 2   | ju9  | 92          | 71.8 |
| 4             | 3   | 4    | 3    | 5    | 4    | 3    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 3    |       | 3.78          | 0.78      | T7              | 3               | 3   | ju12 | 84          | 72.4 |
| 5             | 4   | 4    | 4    | 7    | 3    | 5    | 4    | 3    | 5    | 3    |       | 4.22          | 0.22      | T18             | 3               | 4   | ji7  | 97          | 71.1 |
| 6             | 4   | 5    | 7    | 4    | 5    | 5    | 7    | 4    | 4    | 5    |       | 5.11          | 1.11      | T2              | 4               | 5   |      |             |      |
| 7             | 5   | 5    | 6    | 5    | 6    | 5    | 6    | 6    | 6    | 3    |       | 5.33          | 0.33      | T14             | 3               | 6   |      |             |      |
| 8             | 3   | 3    | 3    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    |       | 3.33          | 0.33      | T14             | 2               | 7   |      |             |      |
| 9             | 4   | 4    | 4    | 6    | 4    | 6    | 5    | 4    | 3    | 4    |       | 4.44          | 0.44      | T13             | 3               | 8   |      |             |      |
| Frt           | 36  | 40   | 43   | 44   | 38   | 44   | 44   | 39   | 42   | 38   |       | 41.33         |           |                 | 31              | 9   |      |             |      |
| 10            | 4   | 5    | 4    | 7    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 4    | 5    | 5    |       | 5.00          | 1.00      | T4              | 4               | 10  |      |             |      |
| 11            | 5   | 6    | 6    | 6    | 5    | 7    | 6    | 6    | 5    | 5    |       | 5.78          | 0.78      | T7              | 5               | 11  |      |             |      |
| 12            | 4   | 5    | 6    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 4    | 6    | 4    |       | 5.00          | 1.00      | T4              | 4               | 12  |      |             |      |
| 13            | 3   | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 3    | 3    | 3    |       | 3.56          | 0.56      | T11             | 3               | 13  |      |             |      |
| 14            | 4   | 4    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 7    | 4    | 7    | 4    | 6    |       | 5.22          | 1.22      | 1               | 4               | 14  |      |             |      |
| 15            | 4   | 3    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 5    | 5    | 4    | 5    | 5    |       | 4.33          | 0.33      | T14             | 3               | 15  |      |             |      |
| 16            | 4   | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 6    | 5    | 4    | 4    |       | 4.89          | 0.89      | 6               | 4               | 16  |      |             |      |
| 17            | 3   | 4    | 4    | 5    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 4    | 4    | 3    |       | 3.78          | 0.78      | T7              | 3               | 17  |      |             |      |
| 18            | 5   | 6    | 5    | 4    | 5    | 7    | 7    | 5    | 5    | 6    |       | 5.56          | 0.56      | T11             | 4               | 18  |      |             |      |
| Back          | 36  | 41   | 43   | 45   | 40   | 49   | 46   | 42   | 41   | 41   |       | 43.11         |           |                 | 34              | 19  |      |             |      |
| TOT           | 72  | 81   | 86   | 89   | 78   | 93   | 90   | 81   | 83   | 79   |       | 84.44         |           |                 | 65              | 20  |      |             |      |
| Tour Rds >    |     |      |      | Yes  |      |      |      |      | Yes  |      |       | Low           | High      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
|               |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | 78            | 93        |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
|               |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | Total         | Ave / Rd  |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| # Eagles      | 0   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    |       | 1             | 0.11      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| # Birdies     | 1   | 0    | 1    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 1    | 1    |       | 7             | 0.78      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| # Pars        | 8   | 9    | 6    | 8    | 3    | 5    | 9    | 7    | 8    |      |       | 63            | 7         |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| # Bogies      | 10  | 6    | 6    | 8    | 10   | 9    | 7    | 8    | 6    |      |       | 70            | 7.78      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
| 2X+ Bogies    | 0   | 3    | 5    | 0    | 5    | 4    | 1    | 2    | 2    |      |       | 22            | 2.44      |                 |                 |     |      |             |      |
|               |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       | Ave:          | Low       | High            |                 |     |      |             |      |
| # Putts       | 37  | 39   | 33   | 30   | 37   | 34   | 32   | 34   | 31   |      |       | 307           | 34.11     | 30              | 39              |     |      |             |      |
| # FWs         | 4   | 3    | 4    | 7    | 2    | 4    | 4    | 6    | 7    |      |       | 41            | 4.56      | 2               | 7               |     |      |             |      |
| # GIR         | 5   | 4    | 6    | 6    | 3    | 2    | 4    | 5    | 5    |      |       | 40            | 4.44      | 2               | 6               |     |      |             |      |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| No. Lessons: | 4 |
| No. Clinics: | 3 |

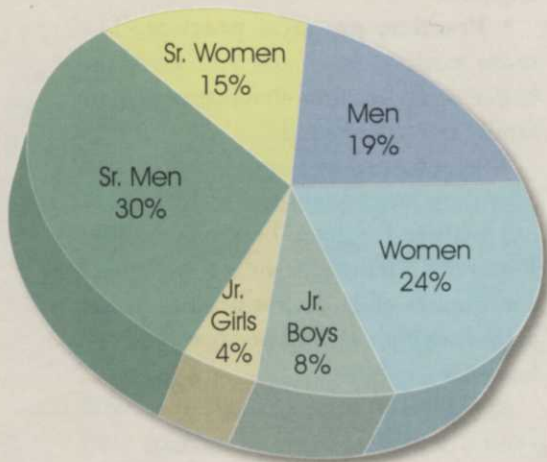
|            |      |       |        |
|------------|------|-------|--------|
| Total Rds: |      |       |        |
| Home       | Away | Total | Tour   |
| 9          | 4    | 13    | 2 of 9 |

|            |      |      |
|------------|------|------|
| Hdcp Index | Date | Tour |
| Start 14.6 | ap15 | 15.2 |
| Curr 16.3  | ji7  | 14.9 |
| End        |      |      |
| Low 14.6   | ap15 |      |
| High 17.1  | ju22 |      |

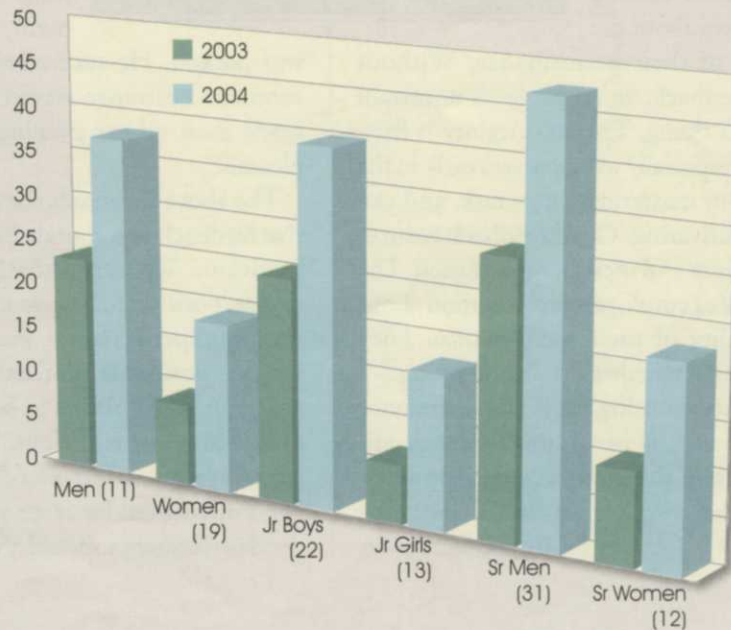
Example

Percentage of members taking lessons



Examples

Annual rounds played totals/ Student groups







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# Benefits of feedback

**W**e all want and need feedback, often dread receiving feedback and frequently are uncomfortable giving feedback. Few of us really understand feedback or manage the process of providing feedback.

Dictionary.com defines feedback as: "The return of information about the result of a process or activity; an evaluative response." To understand the critical role of performance feedback in employee management, consider the following statements:

- Each of us are constantly giving and receiving feedback, if not explicitly, then implicitly;
- Performance is influenced the most by consequences; and
- Good performance should be treated differently than poor performance.

The bottom line is that each of us continuously provides employees with feedback, and that feedback impacts performance. When we use implicit and unplanned explicit feedback, we will often provide inappropriate feedback – with negative performance consequences. When you have a friendly, positive interaction with an employee who's performing poorly, what message do you think he receives? When you interact with an employee whose performance exceeds expectations while you're in a bad mood, what message do you think he receives?

The absence of feedback and unintended or inappropriate feedback is a major barrier to superior performance.

Feedback informs employees about the quality of their performance. Without good feedback, an employee is uncertain how he's doing. This uncertainty is frustrating, especially to employees early in the process of mastering a new task, and can be demotivating. Good feedback reduces uncertainty and increases motivation. The majority of employees are uncertain about the quality of their performance. They don't know whether they're "winning."

The key to using feedback to enhance performance is providing feedback appropriate to the performance. Appropriateness has two key attributes. First, the feedback is focused on the performance,

not on the person. This is especially critical when performance is below the expected standard. Second, the feedback must correctly communicate the supervisor's assessment of the employee's performance. The latter attribute requires the following three forms of feedback rather than the usual two (positive and negative):

- Positive – used when performance meets or exceeds the standard;
- Negative – a reprimand, a punishment, a demotion, removal from activity – something bad from the employee's perspective. This should be used when performance doesn't meet the standard because of a personal characteristic, behavior of attitude of the individual; and
- Redirection – incorrect performance is stopped and redirected using training. This should be used when performance doesn't meet the standard because of something in the context of the performance.

## A morale builder

As I approached the registration desk in the nearly vacant lobby of an economy motel, my hope was to complete a hassle-free registration and get to my room. I was surprised when a friendly, helpful gentleman asked if I needed anything special or any local information. I thanked him and proceeded to my room with a little extra bounce in my step. When I passed the registration desk on my way to grab a bite

to eat, he called me by name. I stopped and thanked him for the unusually good service. Although a bit self-conscious with my compliment, he obviously

was pleased. He succeeded in providing excellent customer service, and we had made each other's evening a little more pleasant.

The above illustrates the power of positive feedback as a morale builder and as a motivator. We must, however, be careful to use positive feedback to reward only successful performance. Positive feedback serves as positive reinforcement causing an action or performance to be repeated. Although this seems obvious, it's not. We often want to use positive feedback to reward good intentions; however, remember that good performance should always be treated

differently than poor performance.

Why is positive feedback beneficial?

- **Positive feedback focuses the recipient on success.** It serves as a reward to the recipient for an outcome or an action that contributed to business success. This reinforces the success-creating behavior and causes it to be repeated. Individuals and teams perform better when striving for success rather than when avoiding failure.

- **Positive feedback is motivating.** Feelings of personal accomplishment and recognition for achievement are two motivators. Positive feedback provides both and also might provide a third: a sense of importance to the business.

- **Positive feedback builds confidence.** Continuing successful performance requires that we know the skills and that we have the confidence to perform perfectly every time. Because the confidence follows the skills, positive feedback enhances that confidence and prevents slippage.

- **Positive feedback improves job satisfaction.** Recall my hotel experience. Recall a recent experience when your spouse, family member or friend told you about positive feedback they'd received.

How can we feel more comfortable giving good positive feedback?

- **Become success-minded.** You can reinforce the vision and provide positive feedback by continuously looking for actions and results that contribute to that vision and then always providing positive feedback. Look for successes.

- **Practice appreciative inquiry.** Ask your employees what's going right and use their answers to provide positive feedback.

- **Practice, practice, practice.** The more positive feedback you give, the better you'll become. Practice with your family and your friends.

The outcome we should seek is that providing large quantities of high-quality, positive feedback becomes a habit. Research finds that, for most of us, it takes a minimum of 21 days of practice before providing high quality positive feedback becomes a habit.

As you move into the heart of the golf season, I challenge you to increase your and your employees' job satisfaction by dramatically including the quantity and quality of positive feedback. GCN

WHEN WE USE IMPLICIT AND UNPLANNED EXPLICIT FEEDBACK, WE WILL OFTEN PROVIDE INAPPROPRIATE FEEDBACK.





# PERCEPTION



# REALITY

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3. Reduced chemical fungicide use
4. Better stress tolerance
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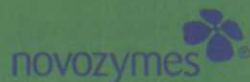


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\*\*Anthracnose control Penn State and Rutgers research trials, 2004.

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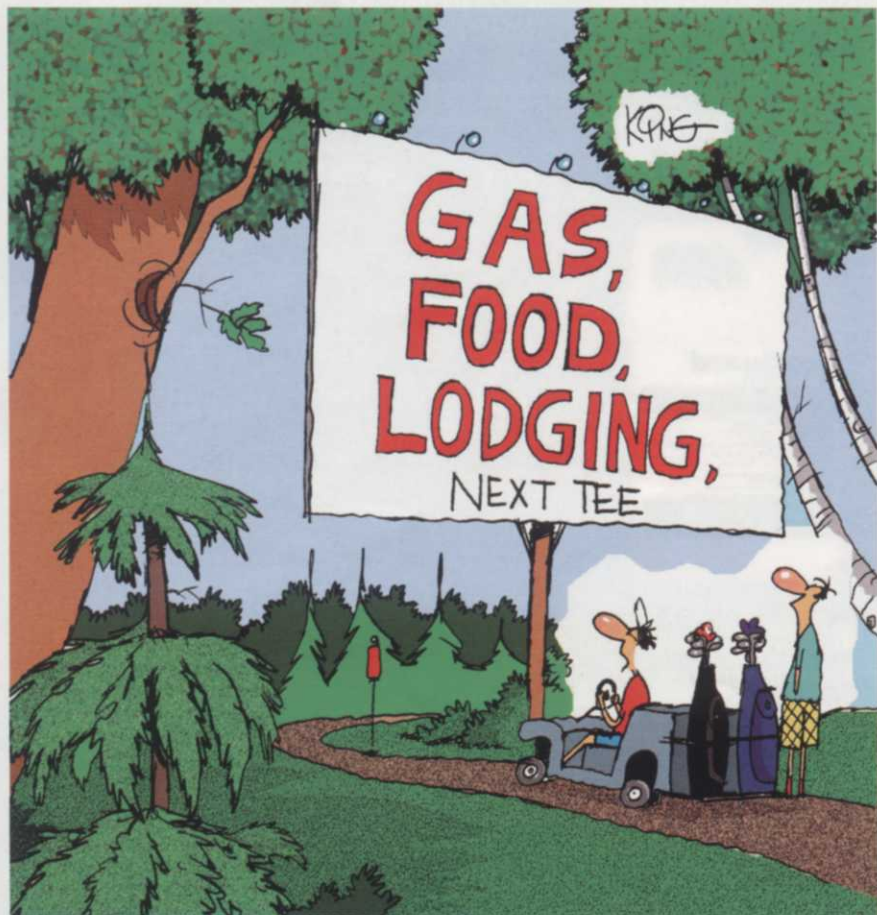
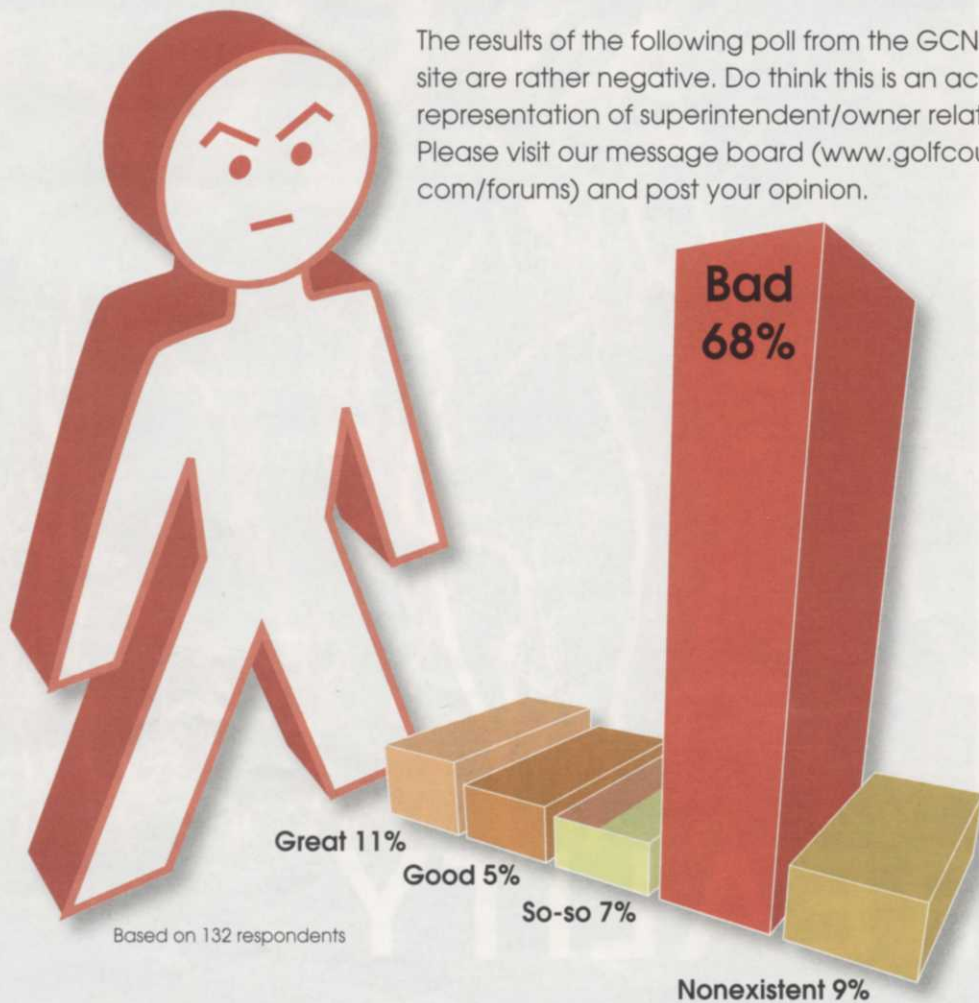
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USE READER SERVICE #18



## What is your relationship like with the owner of the course you are in charge of maintaining?

The results of the following poll from the GCN Web site are rather negative. Do think this is an accurate representation of superintendent/owner relationships? Please visit our message board ([www.golfcoursenews.com/forums](http://www.golfcoursenews.com/forums)) and post your opinion.



Source: Jerry King

*"This has to be the longest course I've ever played!"*

## BY THE NUMBERS

**1,700** The number of people from all facets of the green industry who attended the Reinders show in Wisconsin in March

The 17th hole on the Stadium Course of the Tournament Players Club at Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., is popular. One can buy its image on towels (\$22), tote bags (\$24), tall insulated glasses (\$17) or short ones (\$11), 16-ounce Tervis tumblers (\$16.50), ball markers (\$22 in a boxed set of three plus a divot repair tool), divot repair tool alone (\$12), bag tags (\$15), the sales tags of umbrellas (\$31.50), T-shirts (\$18 kids, \$25 adults), posters (\$22), marble coasters (\$50 for a set of four with stand), lap robes (\$55), limited edition photos by James Quonze Jr. (\$149.99-\$499.99) and official programs (\$5).

The median green fee in **\$40** Florida, according to the National Golf Foundation

**2,300** The number of donuts that were eaten at the Reinders show, which has been a tradition since the first show in 1973.

The number of new 9- and 18-hole golf courses that opened in California in 2004, according to NGF

**62.5**

The number of golf courses that closed during 2004, according to NGF

**12,023** The number of households per 18-hole equivalent golf courses in Maine, according to NGF

**17**

## QUOTABLE

"I have the highest admiration for the group (of superintendents) growing grass in St. Louis. The saying goes, 'You can go from St. Louis to anywhere and be successful.'" - **Tony Mancuso**, CGCS, director of golf course operations at Cherokee Town & Country Club in Atlanta, and former superintendent at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis

"Routing a course is like cutting a diamond, you only have one chance to do it perfectly." - **Joe Salemi**, owner, designer and builder of Boulder Creek Golf Club in Streetsboro, Ohio

"I like to do more than daily maintenance. I always want to improve a course. Some of these courses (in South Dakota) aren't the most desirable, but they need improvement and can boost my resume." - **Bryan Tipton**, certified golf course superintendent at Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Williston, N.D.

"We like to consider ourselves a cut above everybody else, but that's just our opinion. We feel that way because we are often out in front doing things that others aren't doing." - **Tom Watschke**, professor of turfgrass science at Penn State University, about the university's turfgrass program





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## A changing world

### THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF STUDYING TURFGRASS

by  
JOHN  
WALSH

**Q** How did you get into turfgrass research?

The summer before I was admitted into dental school at the University of Iowa, I started to work at a golf course as a summer job in my hometown of Charles City, Iowa. And, as any turf person will tell you, it's almost an addiction. I call my students turf junkies because once it gets in your blood – if it's going to be something of significance for you – you just can't let it go. So I deferred away from dental school and went into turfgrass management at Iowa State and earned an undergraduate degree.

Somewhere along the later stages of my undergraduate career, I became interested in research because I worked in the greenhouse for the graduate students, helping them with their dissertation work. I started applying for graduate school and went to Virginia Tech for my M.S. and Ph.D. Those advance degrees were basic in the sense of academia because I was interested in plant physiology and biochemistry. So my research projects in most instances were pretty basic, rather than the applied sciences in the research world.

Getting closer to the end of my Ph.D. work and watching Dick Schmidt, my major professor, and what he was doing and what he had to go through as a faculty member at a good institution didn't move me much. I didn't want to have all the distractions of committees and classes. I wanted a research position. I convinced myself that I wanted to go to work for an agriculture chemical company that was producing a turf product line.

About six months before I finished, I began talking to others who were young faculty members who gave me a perspective about academic life that I hadn't realized prior to those conversations. Then I narrowed my choice to Penn State University because of the reputation of its turf program. I said, "If an academic position ever became open, I would like to be considered." So while on

hold, my predecessor, Tom Perkins, was looking to do what I thought I wanted to do, which was to go to an agriculture chemical company, and he did. That left an opening at Penn State. I was called and asked if I would interview, and I did. I liked what I saw and liked the turf faculty and fortunately was offered the position. I reported for duty as an assistant professor in October of 1970 and have been there ever since.

**Q** What are some universities on par with Penn State?

That's a hard one because all the land grant universities have good turf programs to some degree. That might be a single faculty member, or it could be a half dozen, or it could be more. If I was a high-school kid interested in turf, living in North Carolina, I would go to N.C. State because they have a really good program there. The same could be said of New Jersey – Rutgers has a good program. So does Ohio State and Michigan State. If I was growing up in Iowa, I would go to Iowa State, which has a good program.

We like to consider ourselves a cut above everybody else, but that's just our opinion. We feel that way because we are often out in front doing things that others aren't doing. For example, we have a two-year technical program that was initiated in 1959 before anybody else had anything of the sort. And it's still viable today.

We launched the first undergraduate degree program in which a student could get a B.S. in turfgrass science in 1992. There weren't any degree programs before that. Now there are four: Ohio State, Rutgers and Georgia followed us.

And for the past few years, we have had a world campus program, which is all on the Web. We have students from all over the world who take our turfgrass management programs on the computer.

We just received approval from the faculty senate to offer our four-year degree

program online to students all over the world. A student anywhere in the world can earn a four-year baccalaureate degree in turfgrass science from Penn State on the Internet.

**Q** Has the number of students in the turfgrass program increased throughout the years? If so, why?

We've seen an increase, which has to do with the growth of the turfgrass industry and its diversity. You can say X percent of our undergraduates are going to become golf course superintendents, landscape contractors or athletic field managers. That dynamic tends to shift as students have interest in the job market. For example, the largest growth area for undergraduates is managing sports fields; and consequently, on a percentage basis, the largest increase in our undergraduate population who majored in turf has an interest in managing athletic fields, not golf courses. So the turfgrass industry at large is continuing to grow.

**Q** Is there a need for more students in the research field?

We need more talented academic students capable of graduate work. I don't mean that in a demeaning way about the students we have. We have some excellent students, but they want to be turf managing professionals. They don't have an interest in research or graduate school. At most, we have 2 percent of the total undergraduate population that has an interest in graduate school. And that's starting to bring about some problems as we look at trying to hire and fill positions like mine. Where are the young ones going to come from? There's a potential shortfall.

**Q** Do you see problems because of that during the next 10 to 15 years?

Yes. There's a fairly significant number of us old-timers who are going to retire, and

GOLF COURSE NEWS  
INTERVIEWS DR. TOM  
WATSCHKE, PROFESSOR  
OF TURFGRASS  
SCIENCE AT PENN STATE  
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