

me there's the same level of detection occurring in Florida as is occurring in other places," Murphy says. "I'm assuming there's very sandy soil. I don't know if it's applicable to all soil types in the United States, but I'm not disputing they detected it. Florida has unique soils in many respects, but would that be applicable to Georgia, or Raleigh, N.C.? I don't know if it would be in those soils."

Jones responds: "Florida is described as an area of concern because of its very sandy soils and shallow water tables with golf courses particularly susceptible to leaching because they typically have well-drained soils and are heavily irrigated," she says, referencing the RED.

"Similar environments, within Florida and nationally, would be considered to be highly vulnerable," she adds. "These include areas with shallow water tables, low background (naturally existing) arsenic levels and well-drained soils to which arsenicals to not sorb strongly."

Michal Eldan, Ph.D., is chairperson of the MAA Research Task Force, a coalition of three MSMA producers. The task force is dedicated to the safe use of MSMA and disodium methanearsonate. Like Murphy and his colleagues, the MAA Research Task Force penned a letter disagreeing with the EPA's decision.

Eldan says the task force presented the EPA with results of modeling to demonstrate that MSMA's contribution of inorganic arsenicals was below what the EPA defined as the accepted level. The EPA then lowered the acceptable level, Eldan says.

"It's like a moving target," she says about the EPA's requirements.

The MAARTF had a consultant, Waterborne Environmental International, create a model in which a supposed MSMA was used at the highest frequency possible, on every square inch of a golf course with all the MSMA transforming to the more toxic inorganic arsenical. The model represented levels that are

never as high normally, Eldan says.

"If you get good results with the worst-case scenario, you don't have to worry, but if you have results that are unacceptable, you have to refine the model for more reasonable assumptions," she says.

With these worst-case scenario results, the model shows the levels of inorganic arsenicals contributed exceeded 10 parts per billion – the EPA's stated acceptable limit at the time, she says. The task force then presented to the EPA a new model that scaled down the hypothetical MSMA usage to an amount more likely to be used on a golf course.

Eldan says that when the task force presented this model to the EPA, the agency responded that the accepted contribution level was three parts per billion. This happened twice, she says, and each time task force consultants scaled the model down further to be more in line with the label's golf course usage instructions (for example, application as a spot treatment four times a year, and only on fairways). The



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RED cites the original model presented, which supposes MSMA is applied at the highest possible amount.

It got to the point where the EPA told the task force the accepted contribution level was 0.02 parts per billion, Eldan says, pointing out that's less than analytical methods are capable of distinguishing.

Finding a replacement

MSMA is the only herbicide that can successfully eradicate dallisgrass, Murphy says.

"Registration cancellation of the organic arsenical herbicides places an undue hardship on turfgrass managers attempting to control a weed that severely lowers the value of his/her commodity," reads the letter co-signed by Murphy.

Others in the industry are pointing to other effects they say the reversal of registration could cause.

"We know it's an economic issue for sod producers," says Stuart Cohen, president of Environmental & Turf Services, a consulting firm retained by the MAA Task Force.

"If they allow weeds to grow in the sod and they sell it, the buyer will find someone else to buy from in the future. Superintendents and green committees don't like to have broad areas of weeds on their tees and fairways."

The EPA report states many alternatives exist to control weeds in the absence of organic arsenicals. It names flauzifop and dithiopyr as chemicals that have postemergent control and dithiopyr or pendimethlin for preemergent control of crabgrass. It describes the primary method of weed control as maintenance of high quality turf.

"However, when chemical control of grass weeds is needed, typically, two or more alternative chemicals would be required to achieve weed control com-

parable to the organic arsenicals," the report states.

The RED concludes that because there are alternatives to using MSMA, the benefits of the compound don't outweigh the risks.

Although he doesn't agree with this outcome, Murphy is glad such oversight occurs.

"I'm glad we have agencies that are reviewing the pesticides that we use and the pharmaceutical drugs we take," he says. "They're charged with trying to make sure what's out there is only of low risk."

Murphy hopes end users of the herbicide will let the EPA hear their concerns no matter which side of the fence they're on.

The EPA's RED can be viewed at www.epa.gov/oppsrdd1/reregistration/methanearsonic_acid/. Comments can be mailed to the EPA in the address listed in the document, e-mailed or

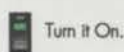


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Jones says the EPA will review any comments submitted and decide how to proceed from there. An official response will be released. If the ruling stands, registration would be canceled on all organic arsenicals studied. There would then be a period for any who disagree to request a hearing. This is the expected course of action.

"The EPA considered submitted human health and environmental fate data as well as available open literature in its reregistration eligibility decision," Jones says. "Based on available data, the EPA is unlikely to change its conclusions. If previously unsubmitted data were to become available, the EPA would evaluate these data and potentially revise its decision as appropriate."

To read the EPA's report on MSMA and other organic arsenicals, visit www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/methanearsonic_acid. GCN

Tweaking the Tour

Agronomy department adds two positions

by John Walsh

The PGA Tour is tweaking the structure of its agronomy department to strengthen it.

Heading the department is Cal Roth, vice president of agronomy, who took over for Jon Scott, who left the PGA Tour to work with Nicklaus Design as chief agronomist.

"We're fine tuning the operations of the agronomy department, which Jon left in great shape," Roth says. "My transition has been smooth thanks to Jon and the quality and experience of the existing staff."

After an evaluation, it was decided the agronomy department needed to add two positions: a PGA Tour agronomist,

which has been filled by Bland Cooper, who came from ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance, and a director of agronomy, which the Tour is in the process of filling.

"What that does is structure the department so we have a director of agronomy for the TPC clubs and one for competitions," says Roth, who's been with the PGA Tour for 23 years.

There are two divisions within the agronomy department: one for competitions and another for the TPC clubs. Regional director Collier Miller will take over as director of agronomy and golf course maintenance operations for the TPC clubs, filling the vacant spot created when Roth left it to fill Scott's position,

(continued on page 49)





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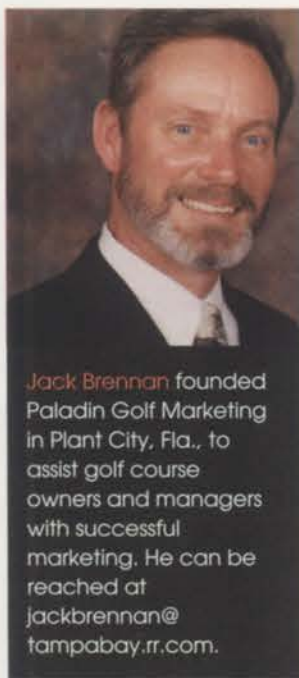
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Spurring more ideas



Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing in Plant City, Fla., to assist golf course owners and managers with successful marketing. He can be reached at jackbrennan@tampabay.rr.com.

Last year, this month's column was devoted to identifying and solving problems through marketing solutions. Solving a facility's real problem(s) is effective marketing and effective operations. However, just conceiving marketing ideas that sound good or are dreamed up as a knee-jerk reaction to a real or perceived problem are, at best, mediocre, short-term promotions.

Problems aren't solved by creative, even ingenious, marketing promotions, but rather by marketing programs that address long-term solutions or goals based on a course's unique market position. You shouldn't confuse them.

Last month, I addressed the notion of possibly running out of marketing ideas for your facility in its unique market. The premise was that if you frequently believe you've run out of ideas to help your facility succeed, it's possible you're losing your passion for the business because you simply can't run out of marketing ideas. They're all around you – pervasive in life. They simply need to be modified appropriately to serve your facility in its market.

In preparation for last month's column, I e-mailed a network of golf industry people and asked them what they do if and when they find themselves uncreative and at a loss for marketing ideas. Their input might help inspire you:

Brian Gaines, regional vice president of business development for Meadowbrook Golf: "I keep files (paper and electronic) of every marketing idea I've ever come across and categorize them according to product type (private, semiprivate, daily fee, resort, etc.). Then, when I need an idea and am lacking inspiration, I'll go back and thumb through the files to see if one of them jumps out as being appropriate to a situation or sometimes spawns a different variation."

An advertising guy once said: "There are no new marketing ideas, only old ones that have been brought back or reworked." This isn't completely true, but there's value in the suggestion.

Mike Miraglia, Fore Golf Associates: "When I'm out of ideas, we go back to the old tried-and-true promotions, aka the basics or fundamentals, basically going back through history and finding the promotional items that worked the best and running one of those."

Douglas K. Spear, president of Spear Consultants: "When you run out of ideas, seek out someone who hasn't run out of marketing ideas, such as a professional."

Arthur Jeffords, president of Herberton Lighthouse Golf: "The best marketing idea, whether before or after you run out of other marketing ideas, is to remember that the best customer to market to is the one you already have. The better you treat and service your current customers, the more they'll return and remain loyal in spite of the marketing or discounting of the competition. They'll also recommend you to others and bring their friends. Good old-fashioned customer service still works, and customers appreciate and remember it. And, as always, if we all 'just say no' to discounting, then the industry will be better off."

John Reger, general manager of Haile Plantation Golf & Country Club: "Network. If you're in the golf

business, you have an incredible network of people willing to help you: PGA of America, U.S. Golf Association, National Golf Foundation, not to mention friends and associates. Ask around. You won't run out of marketing ideas if you care to succeed in today's golf market."

Dick Weiss, managing partner of Strategic Shaft Technologies (SST-PURE) and golf course owner: "Survey your members or players and ask what would encourage them to frequent the club more often. They might just tell ya."

Gerry Black, president of Relax Communications: "I once read about the idea of sitting down with a piece of paper and writing out a '100 ways to increase sales' list. You might not get close to 100, but it will force you to focus on things you aren't currently doing. A lot of times, people run out of ideas because they're too lazy to use their imagination. They try the traditional stuff, and then that's it."

Marc Brady, general manager of Tryon Country Club: "When all else seems to be faltering, educate your customers. Invite your members/guests to a forum about golf course 'agronomy 101.' Market yourself, your superintendent and staff to your members/guests by educating them about

what you studied, your course issues, your typical work day, basic agronomy, etc. Quell rumors. We often hear various suggestions/solutions from members that are so far from reality, but they don't know the business of golf. Help them learn about the business side. They'll appreciate it."

Danny Mays, president of Maverick Golf: "As an owner of a course, the only way I can truly understand the market surrounding any golf property – and they're all very different – is to take the time to ride the course (or sit on the first tee or putting green) and ask basic marketing questions about your type of facility (what's the daily fee, how did you hear about the course, how far did you drive, how did you get here) along with a

visit to your competition (That's always a fun one because the golf business is seemingly a turf war in some markets, usually the over-supplied one where there's discounting.)

WHEN MARKETING BECOMES PART OF YOUR EVERYDAY WORK ROUTINE, YOU'LL SOON REALIZE THAT YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL, TOO.

to discuss the global golf market and how to get more rounds to the area. Usually, I find the absentee owner or large management company staff is afraid to open up, thus, perhaps listening to their customers while visiting might give you the insight into their successful avenues of marketing.

"The answer could simply be reprioritizing the existing staff's focus away from less productive tasks and communicating the importance of seeking good, realistic market information versus playing golf with Bernice Goldbloom in the afternoon."

Al Martell, Castle & Cooke: "When I run out of marketing ideas, I call my consultant. If and when he runs out of ideas, we're all in trouble."

The above should give you practical understanding of what some influential people think about marketing and developing marketing ideas. It can be difficult for some, but for those who make marketing an everyday practice, it can come naturally. When marketing becomes part of your everyday work routine, you'll soon realize that you're successful, too.

Success comes to those who market wisely. GCN

Famous architect syndrome

Golf course renovations always have been a substantial part of most golf course architects' businesses and have become a larger part since 9/11 and the new-construction recession. While the renovation trend is accelerating, a related trend of restoring old courses rather than redesigning them is gaining momentum as well.

This trend dates to the 1979 U.S. Open at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, when three new holes didn't match the original look of the Donald Ross design. The trend gained momentum with the sensitive restoration of The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., for the 1988 U.S. Open.

On the other hand, poor renovation jobs led to the creation of associations, like the Donald Ross Society, devoted to preserving the work of many Golden Age golf course architects and the emergence of independent, golf-design historians and golf course architects specializing in restorations.

While most courses are renovated for "here and now" reasons, many are considering restoring their courses to their original look as closely as possible or to their high point (i.e., the year they hosted a major tournament). Most golf course architects start the master planning process by asking whether members want to restore, rejuvenate, renovate or remodel

their course. The definitions vary from architect to architect, but we all seem to provide the same alliterative choices as a starting point.

So which one is in the best interests of your club? There are pro's and con's to each approach.

Change is good

The case for restoration builds if a course was designed by a famous deceased architect (Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Seth Raynor, Perry Maxwell and Alister MacKenzie). However, these architects are responsible for less than 5 percent of the 16,000-plus courses that exist today. Several no longer exist, others have been dramatically

altered, and frankly, not all their courses were the masterpieces their supporters claim them to be. Assuming that only the top 50 percent of their courses might be worth restoring for historical value, that would amount to 300 courses.

The difficulties of a restoration start with the realization that most courses have evolved from their original designs by nature or necessity. A philosophical question: Has golf changed so much since the original design that we should consider a redesign as an adaptive reuse of a facility?

On golf courses, irrigation ponds were added, and drainage ponds and channels were expanded. These need to stay. But because of modern equipment, some features are no longer in play. Changes in maintenance demands and practices might make greens too steep, tees too small and bunkers impractical; and more lush fairways reduce the ground game.

Many famous deceased architects wrote about the need to allow for future length, so most people accept the idea of new back tees. But what about greens? Should

their original size and contour be restored, knowing they're too steep for modern green speeds? Should bunkers that are 150 yards off the tee be replaced or moved further out to replicate the intended strategy? That depends on whether the bunker would fit the land similarly as the original, but it illustrates the value judgments needed.

So, the question arises: What constitutes a restoration? Whatever it is, it's an approximation at best.

So, the question arises: What constitutes a restoration? Whatever it is, it's an approximation at best.

Rejuvenate it

A key part of restoration is the historian or golf course architect trying to determine what the original architect's intent was. If we could reincarnate Ross to consult on a particular green, he might say it wasn't one of his best projects. It's difficult enough for green committees to arrive at a consensus without adding a historian or someone from a protectionist society who considers

himself stakeholder in your affairs to help make the decision.

If your course is truly a classic, there are marketing benefits of restoration. However, with the oversupply of facilities creating pressure to update courses, renovation might not be your best option. With so few golfers interested in architecture and the lure of catchy marketing campaigns that sell memberships or home lots, many owners need a completely new look for their courses to remain competitive. As someone said, "Since I'm paying dues in 2006, I prefer a 2006 golf course."

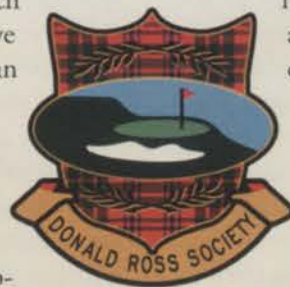
So, I often propose rejuvenation as a better solution, improving maintenance conditions and allowing some updates for the modern game while being sympathetic to the original style. Being sensitive to a good original design usually makes sense, and building over a good course from scratch usually is more expensive and doesn't provide much additional benefit. Generally, my guideline is to follow the existing routing to reduce infrastructure costs and propose feature designs I can justify that increase safety or improve maintenance.

After I'm gone

People ask how I would feel if someone remodeled my work after I'm dead. I don't know what happens in the afterlife, but I have a feeling I won't give a damn. I don't want to saddle the next generation with my wishes from the grave. I hope my course designs are well documented in photos, plans and in my own writing and will be placed in the care of thoughtful and reasonable people. But if my courses survive in any semblance of their original design, that'll be a good enough tribute to my designs.

Some of my courses have been altered already. Bunkers were removed to reduce maintenance costs, and while I might not like it, I understand it — conditions change, and courses must change with them.

I build playing fields for human enjoyment, and if that enjoyment wanes for reasons beyond my control, the important thing is to make sure golfers enjoy the game and the course. GCN



THE DIFFICULTIES OF A RESTORATION START WITH THE REALIZATION THAT MOST COURSES HAVE EVOLVED FROM THEIR ORIGINAL DESIGNS BY NATURE OR NECESSITY.



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The assistant trap

If the role of the golf professional might be looked at as the sexiest job in golf, the role of the golf course superintendent as the most essential job in golf, and the role of the club manager as the most beguiling job in golf, the roles of assistants within the three professions can be looked at as the final approaches to career success.

Unfortunately, assistant jobs don't always lead to successful careers in golf because too many of those entering the assistant job market *settle* for the softer jobs available and stay too long at these positions as opposed to *selecting* a more challenging career path that presents the inherent discomfort and risks associated with changing jobs early in a career. Only the naïve can believe that staying too long at a job will bear good fruit. The more mature understand the need for assistants to test their mettle by changing jobs to seek a more immediate challenge.

The stark reality of staying too long within the assistant job market is: (1.) While an assistant has spent from four to eight or more years searching for a career in golf, his/her school peer class has been on the job gaining invaluable experience elsewhere, to the point where the assistant can no longer compete with peers outside golf; and (2.) the assistant, consequently, has become too old to be welcomed into entry-level industry jobs outside golf.

With virtually no meaningful place to go, late escaping assistants have been literally career trapped at a point in their lives when they should be growing into their peak career years. To ward off this type of calamity, assistants should:

- Change jobs to move up the job ladder;
- Develop a career Web site;
- Assume if after about five years in the profession they can't begin to break through the pervasive top job interview barrier, get out of golf; and
- Always continue their education to enhance evolving careers in golf and to develop post assistantship job opportunities outside golf should the need arise.

Assistant pros

The role of the assistant golf professional is the most *intriguing* assistantship in golf because it offers tantalizing enticements

and, at the same time, presents arguably the biggest challenge to achieving career success in golf.

The enticement factor translates into the disarming appeal of the profession in which an assistant shooting a score lower than 80 when playing with always approving members, or giving a lesson a week for which he/she will never be held accountable, creates the false illusion of growing into a meaningful career. The collective impact of these types of misleading opportunities is they hold assistants in to what should otherwise be perceived as dead-end careers.

The challenge factor translates into the need that every aspiring golf professional must address, i.e., to become a completely effective and passionate teacher of the game. Until a golf professional can consistently inspire and elevate the playing levels of student golfers through his/her teaching ability, meaningful careers in golf will always remain out of reach because too many less-talented people are available to do everything else a golf professional does in the course of a day.

Therefore, the general five-year "in or out" guideline might not apply to assistant golf professionals, provided the assistant is maturing consistently into a more effective golf instructor – a process that takes time. However, once assistants realize they don't have the passion for teaching and, therefore, aren't effective instructors, they should leave golf quickly.

Assistant superintendents

The role of the assistant golf course superintendent is the most *unique* assistantship in golf because, unlike elsewhere in golf, an individual must commit to a considerable investment of time and money to earn a multiyear college degree to qualify for a meaningful assistant job. Acknowledging this commitment, the obvious question becomes whether the general five-year "in or out" guideline should apply to assistant golf course superintendents.

The presumed answer to this question must be "yes". However, by maximizing every career enhancing opportunity available, an assistant can extend this five-year probationary period. This means assistant superintendents – more so than other assistants in golf – must meticulously plan

and stretch out their formative career years, or run the risk of sliding aimlessly into career mediocrity. (My March 2005 GCN column profiles the differences that meticulous career planning can have on a superintendent's career.)

Assistant managers

The role of the assistant club manager is the most *troubling* assistantship in golf because assistants are working to gain access to a profession that (1.) prefers to identify more with the hospitality industry than the game of golf – evidence, in part, by the fact that the majority of managers working at golf clubs don't play the game regularly and, consequently, aren't perceived to be within golf's family circle like golf professionals and superintendents are; and (2.) fails to control who can assume the top of the profession title of general manager to the point where there are more less qualified abusing the title than there are qualified using the title. This ongoing situation significantly undermines respect for the profession.

It's not a coincidence the club managers are the only professional membership organization in golf that doesn't have the word "golf" in its title name like the Professional Golfers Association of America and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America do. But, when more than 80 percent of Club Managers Association of America member clubs are golf and country clubs, CMAA members should consider symbolically embracing the game of golf by changing the name of the association.

Therefore, the question whether the five-year "in or out" guideline applies to assistant managers becomes moot because the profession is too unsettled to allow for any meaningful evaluation in this regard. Accordingly, the best advice that can be given to assistant managers is to identify with and play the game at every appropriate opportunity; and to work under as many "true" general managers as possible – the only environment in golf where meaningful club management is practiced.

Golf professionals, superintendents and managers have a responsibility to grow their assistants. However, once assistants lose career focus, they should be firmly pushed out and on – the sooner the better (for them). GCN

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/messageboard.



Developing as a leader

Leadership. What does this often-used word mean to you? What does a leader do? What do you, as a golf course superintendent, do to excel as a leader?

To help realize your leadership potential, you must first understand that leadership needs to be distinguished from management, and what you do as a leader needs to be explored in detail.

My favorite definition of leadership, as expressed by author Marcus Buckingham, is: "Great leaders rally people to a better future." The focus of leadership should be on engaging and motivating a golf facility's work force.

To rally people to a better future, a leader must be able to discover what's universal among his followers. Why Rudy Giuliani become the person we associate with leadership after 9/11? Leadership experts suggest our acknowledgment of Giuliani as a leader began with his answer to a question during a press conference that awful day. Giuliani was asked what he thought the final body count would be. He didn't pass the question to others or talk about numbers; rather, his answer captured the emotion every American was feeling: "It will be more than we can bear." He had voiced what was in our hearts, and we were ready to follow him.

A leader must discover what's universal and capitalize on it. What's universal among your staff?

To understand leadership more clearly, let's look at three functions a leader must do successfully: set direction, plan strategically and develop human capital.

Set direction

When setting direction, your focus should be on articulating the golf course's mission; a compelling vision; a significant purpose and core values; and the engagement of leadership team members, workers and service providers to fulfill the mission or vision.

I recently asked two maintenance employees from different clubs what they do. The first employee, answering haltingly, said, "I mow grass." The second employee, responding quickly with a smile, said, "We provide a great golfing experience for our members."

Note the difference. The second employee understands the contribution the

course makes and views himself as part of a team. The first employee just mows grass. Which employee is more motivated? Which employee would you rather have on your staff? The difference likely lies with the skills of the golf course superintendent and club leadership. So, can you set direction better?

Plan strategically

Strategic planning includes brainstorming, analysis and selection of long-term strategies to improve a golf facility's success and financial health. Such strategies include expansions, organizational learning, identification of competitive opportunities and evaluation of benefits from new ventures.

Good strategic planning requires an understanding of the external factors impacting a facility. Positive factors that have benefited golf courses throughout the years include the increasing affluence of the American public, the emphasis on outdoor activities, the increasing number of healthy retirees, the emergence of golf on television and the excitement created by Tiger Woods.

Additional emerging factors that impact facilities are:

- The land occupied by many courses is valuable. For example, several courses in the Twin Cities have been sold for business, home or condominium development.
- The competition for recreational time and money is more intense. Every year, amusement parks become more prevalent and spectacular. The number of special events, festivals, recreational leagues, activities at local/regional/state/national parks continues to expand and become more attractive as they creatively attract participants.

- A recent study concluded young men and women in their early years in the work force have less available money to spend than those in previous decades. The leading causes were the cost of owning a home and the size of college loan payments.

- The lack of retirement money and plans might cause many baby boomers to return to the work force part time or full time in new jobs or careers.

You have a leadership responsibility to work with others to plan for the future of the facility and to keep those plans in mind as you lead your staff. For example, a su-

perintendent at an aging club in a growing suburban community was concerned about the future of the course and his position. When he visited with the pro, club manager and several board members, he discovered almost everyone had the same concern but nothing was happening. After further conversations, he, the pro and club manager asked to visit with the board of directors to discuss their concerns. The outcome: A small group was selected to work with a strategic planning firm to address the future of the course. The superintendent was pleased to be included in the small group.

Develop human capital

Human capital development involves identifying and improving leadership team members and their roles, responsibilities and performance expectations. A key emphasis is your professional development and that of the facility's leadership.

I've taught seminars for superintendents for more than 10 years, and I am impressed with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's educational program and the interest superintendents have in professional development.

At the same time, I see two areas with great opportunities for improvement. The first is superintendents getting involved in leadership of a facility. In most cases, the superintendent has the most formal and informal training of the leaders. The GCSAA has recognized this need by emphasizing seminars and defining what participants will take back to their courses. Superintendents need to look for opportunities to provide leadership at their facilities.

The second opportunity is career development and planning. Not all of you want to or are able to continue as superintendents into your fifties and sixties. Unfortunately, the next logical career steps are limited. This is one area where you must provide leadership for yourselves. Think about what you plan to do throughout your career and retirement. Everyone should have a professional improvement plan, which should include preparation to excel in your current position and to prepare yourself for the next steps in your career.

Great leaders rally people to a better future. You need to apply this leadership in yourself, your golf course maintenance staff and your facility. GCN



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Hindrances to better business

Here is a list of the top eight challenges for members of the National Golf Course Owners Association:

1. A decline of rounds and revenue
2. Rising operating costs
3. Taxation and legislative issues
4. Marketing and customer service
5. Water/environmental issues
6. Insurance coverage and cost
7. Rampant green-fee discounting
8. Municipal competition

Source: NGCOA

QUOTABLE

"People should get course length out of their heads. Courses need to be tricked up. Everyone wants to have the longest course, yet some of the best courses in the world are short, and some of the longer courses are rubbish." – **Retief Goosen**, professional golfer, about the trend of golf courses becoming longer

"Five or six hours is fine to play a round of golf when you're older because it keeps you out of the bar, but it's not good for the younger people." – **Gary McCord**, professional golfer and golf analyst for CBS Sports

"The government says 36 states will have a water crisis in the next 10 years. Fights over water are no longer confined to the West." – **Robert Glennon**, professor, University of Arizona's Rogers College of Law

"We need to get away from the perfectly green golf course, but we need the owners to go along with it." – **John Fought**, golf course architect, John Fought Design

by the NUMBERS

1.3 The percentage increase of rounds at public courses year over year through August, according to NGF

180 The number of holes at the Mission Hills Golf Club in China

1.6 The percentage increase of rounds at private clubs year over year through August, according to NGF

3,076 The number of acres the Mission Hills Golf Club in Shenzhen, China, comprises

1.4

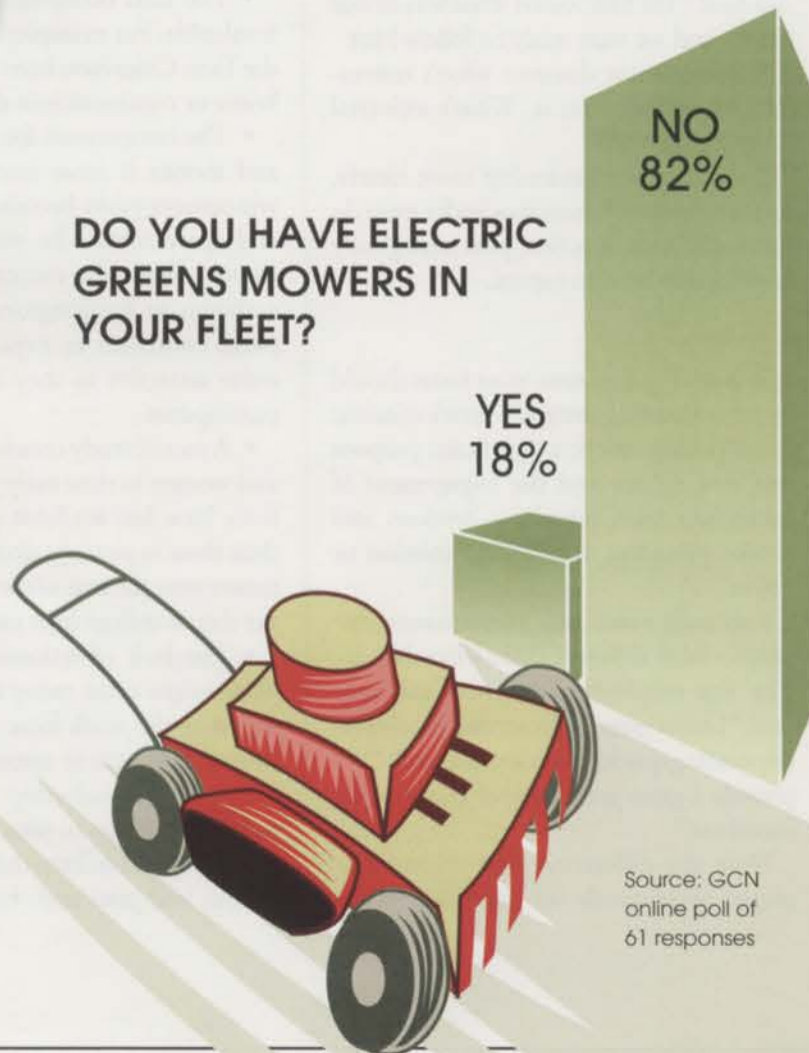
62,000 THE LENGTH, IN YARDS, OF MISSION HILLS' 10 GOLF COURSES

2,500 The number of caddies Mission Hills Golf Club employs

155 The number of bunkers on the Jose Maria Olazabal golf course at Mission Hills

The percentage increase of rounds at all U.S. facilities year over year through August, according to NGF

DO YOU HAVE ELECTRIC GREENS MOWERS IN YOUR FLEET?



Source: GCN online poll of 61 responses

mowers

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I did it my way

ONE GOLF COURSE OWNER ISN'T SO CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

by
PAT
JONES

GCN INTERVIEWS
JOE SALEMI,
OWNER OF
BOULDER CREEK
GOLF CLUB IN
STREETSBORO,
OHIO

About eight years ago, I received a phone call from a guy who said he was building a great new course about 20 miles from my home in Cleveland and I should come see it as soon as possible. He said he was a novice, but he was designing and building the course pretty much himself and it was going to be special. Boulder Creek, he called it.

I receive many of these calls – usually from well-intentioned folks with more money than sense – so I told him, “Yeah, sure. I’ll get out there sometime.” Another crazy rich guy, I thought. Then blew it off.

During the next couple years, driving by the site near Interstate 80, I watched the course come to life. Hmmm ... nice piece of land, I thought. I should check it out. Still, I didn’t. Then the course opened and, to my surprise, it turned up on *Golf Digest’s* list of best new public courses. Wow, I’ve got to get out there, I told myself. Still, I didn’t.

Fast forward five years ... a buddy of mine called to say he needed a fourth for a tee time at ... Boulder Creek. Cool, I finally get to check out the crazy guy’s course. When I get there, before I even get to the first tee, I notice the crazy guy has done many smart things.

The small clubhouse is integrated – one wide counter doubles as an all-in-one pro shop sales desk, check-in point and snack bar. One person can do it all. Doors on either side of the building lead to a partially covered, lighted practice range. The covered part of the range features banks of garage doors so it can serve as secure storage for carts in the off-season. A clever system allows picked-up range balls to be fed into a cleaning hopper and automatically fed right into the machine that dispenses them again.

The price point is attractive for a ranked course at about \$55. Lots of nice landscaping, including hanging baskets of geraniums, lined the route to the first tee.

Another thing I noticed: The parking lot was full ... on a drizzly overcast Tuesday ... in October.

Wow, maybe the crazy guy’s onto something. So I decided right then and there

to find out more about what led Boulder Creek’s owner, designer, builder and chief cook and bottle washer, Joe Salemi, to create his own course and run it in a way that seems pretty different from the average “country club for a day.” Turns out he is crazy ... like a fox. Here’s what I found out.

Q What prompted you to do this?

My family’s in the excavating business. We do a lot of big jobs, like the office buildings in downtown Cleveland. I got into development and was looking for a parcel for a residential subdivision. I was checking it out when I noticed the parcel behind it was a spectacular spot for a golf course. It was being leased by a sand and gravel company at the time, so we had to get that changed and finally bought it in the mid ’90s.

I never played golf until three or four years out of college but fell in love with the game. I always had wanted to build a course. If you love this game, you have two dreams: play on the Tour or build your own course. Well, I can think just as good a game as Tiger, but my body just can’t do it, so I went for option number two.

Q You didn’t know much about course design and construction. What did you do to educate yourself?

I read every book on design that I could get my hands on. If I had to pick one book, it’s A.W. Tillinghast’s “The Course Beautiful.” He wrote some brilliant stuff. I read everything by Alistair MacKenzie, who’s the architect I admire most. We’re using quotes from him on the inside cover of the yardage book. I’m also erecting a MacKenzie monument near the clubhouse along with quotes from different architects on plaques around the course.

But the guy who blew me away was George Crump. If you read his books, he said way back then that Pine Valley would be one of the greatest ever. How did he know that?

The other one I love is Pete Dye. Nobody

today can even carry Pete Dye’s briefcase. His book “Bury My Heart in a Pot Bunker” should be required reading for everyone in the business.

Q How’d you get the project done?

We had aerial topography (mapping) done, and I did the routing plan myself. Then I had a retired superintendent on site for about eight or nine months clearing the property from the center line. We did three clears of about 30 feet from the center each time.

One advantage I had was that I had all the big toys – the dozers and excavators – that we needed to clear and shape. It took us two years to open, but we got it done. We were lucky to find a handful of people at various points to help with drainage, soil profiles, etc., just at the right times during the build.

Q Sounds like luck played a big part in this thing.

Do you believe in destiny? That’s us. I don’t know if I could ever do it again. This was such a massive project. I’ve done bigger stuff, but I built this golf course without any drawings. When I went to get permit approval from the city, I sat down with the mayor and city engineer and told them I had no plans. I had a copy of Pete Dye’s book with me. That’s it. They actually let me do it.

Also, at the time, the Army Corps of Engineers wanted to regulate isolated wetlands, which would have really killed us, but fortunately we fell into a legal black hole just before a Supreme Court ruling and avoided a huge amount of costs and hassles. It’s almost impossible to build a golf course economically. Between permits, stormwater regulations, inflation in the construction industry (steel, copper, oil, etc.), the complications and costs are just too much. We got incredibly lucky in so many ways. It was destiny that we pulled it off.

Then, one day, as I’m looking for a