

VENTRAC



YOU
~~We~~ got all
 the *angles* covered.

Aerator • AERA-vator • Blades • Blowers • Brooms • Edger • Excavator • Generator • Mowers • Power Rake



Scoops • Snow Blower • Stump Grinder • Terra Rakes • Tiller • Tough Cut Mower • Trencher • Turbine Blower • V-Blade • Versa Loader

Your work knows no season. Neither does the **Ventrac**. With standard all wheel drive, plenty of power and flexibility in a small extraordinarily maneuverable package, the Ventrac is up to the task. With over **30 Minute Mount** attachments that can be changed in about a minute or less, Ventrac versatility lets you meet even the tightest of schedules. An articulating frame and the ability to work slopes as steep as 30 degrees, lets you access places other compact tractors simply can't touch. Combine this with industry-leading ease of use and comfort, and your to do list just got shorter.

Over **30 MINUTE MOUNT** attachments.



*3 Year Residential, 2 Year Commercial Limited Warranty

1-866-VENTRAC

www.ventrac.com

info@ventrac.com



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@jeffreydbrauer.com.

MODERN DRAINAGE ISN'T SO BAD

This past November, another industry magazine featured an article about modern golf course drainage written by a golf architecture columnist and historian. Its main points were: (1) The good-old days of golf design were perfect; (2) modern architecture sucks; and (3) golfers don't like catch basins in prime play areas.

The first point is open to debate, the second ruffles my feathers, and the third requires deeper thought. I've discussed the basics of how to design drainage (see my October 2004 column) but would like to address why modern golf courses seem to need more drainage than older ones.

The aforementioned columnist believes older courses magically drained themselves, and modern golf course architects just can't figure it out. Fact is, most old courses drain well now because superintendents have installed new drainage throughout the years. The columnist admits old courses have added much drainage throughout the years, blaming it on wholesale redesigns intended to wipe out the original architecture.

Earlier generations might have accepted soggy turf in wet swales, probably because they sensed technology and/or budgets couldn't prevent it. Nostalgia aside, playing wet courses couldn't have been as pleasant as some might imagine viewing old photos. Nowadays, golfers don't accept the idea that a course takes several years to get in great shape. More importantly, owners and bankers know the value of good drainage to a golf course business plan that depends on:

- Making great first impressions on opening day and beyond. This garners awards, buzz and good word-of-mouth publicity.
- Minimizing down time. Getting back

in play immediately after most rain events – especially if an outing has been booked – maximizes the balance sheet.

The advent of PVC drain pipe makes installation cheaper than ever, raising its cost/benefit ratio to where it makes no sense not to use it. It's easy to imagine Golden Age architects saying the same thing if PVC drain pipe had been available to them. Drain pipe and easy earthmoving wasn't available, so they used natural drainage patterns more than modern architects. Because we have higher per-

“More importantly, owners and bankers know the value of good drainage to a golf course business plan ...”

mitting and design requirements now, we must modify natural contours more than we'd like. Challenges we face that would stun Golden Age architects, include:

- Courses with surrounding housing;
- Accommodating golf carts without tire ruts;
- Accommodating sites that are too flat or steep;
- Environmental concerns; and
- Flood-control regulations.

Naturally, we respond differently.

Architects used to consider only greens and tees as critical protection areas from drainage. With fairways and roughs maintained at higher levels, we grade most turf areas to assure no off-site water crosses them. And given the cart path the primary circulation route through the course, it's better to pick up off-site drainage outside

the cart paths to keep them dry and safe. Increased maintenance levels couldn't be achieved without improved drainage.

Typically, the biggest drainage issue is from adjacent housing. We drain the occasional rain as well as nuisance water from overwatered home lawns. Even on sunny days, there's constant drainage trickling across a course, which would saturate many of those long natural swales formerly used for drainage. Surface drainage concentrates significantly within 300 feet of originating flow, so it's wise to pick up drainage with a catch basin at lesser intervals to prevent rutting from golf carts.

Often, golf courses are part of a regional flood-control plan or have environmental requirements that dictate drainage be directed away from natural creek channels and toward ponds, wetlands, or other holding or filtering areas before being released back to the natural stream system. The goal is to filter storm water and hold it to prevent downstream flooding. These modern regulations were never demanded in the old days, and it's easy to see why our designs are graded more extensively.

Many golfers don't like seeing catch basins on golf courses, and unless necessary, they're placed out of the way. Even 200 12-square-inch basins in 40 fairway acres gives you only a 0.5-percent chance your ball will land on one. I've had only a dozen shots affected by catch basins throughout the years and suspect the actual nuisance is less than perceived visual distraction. A shot is more likely to be affected by one of more than 1,000 sprinkler heads, yet few complain about those.

Seeing more catch basins on a modern golf course doesn't seem like a bad trade-off, considering how much modern drainage has improved turf quality, the playing experience and environmental protection, while helping out everyone's bottom line by reducing maintenance and course downtime to increase revenues. **GCI**

Introducing The New Verti-Drain 7120

(note: Professional Driver-Closed Course)



The new Verti-Drain 7120 outperforms all challengers as the fastest aerator on the course. At depths up to 8 inches and speeds over 3 MPH, the 7120 can aerate hard compacted soil fast and easy. With an 80 inch working width to maximize operating efficiency, the Verti-Drain 7120 is aimed at professionals that are not afraid to go fast.

1-800-597-5664 • Fax: 570-602-3060 • www.redexim.com



**BREAKING BARRIERS
TO BETTER TURF**



SportsTurf
MANAGERS ASSOCIATION



Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@adelphia.net or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

An accepted premise within today's society is that one should not criticize unless he or she has a better idea. As one who has been consistently critical of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's election process, I accept the responsibility to suggest a better way.

I say this because the present election process, with block chapter voting entirely replacing individual member voting, denies every GCSAA member of his or her opportunity to participate in the association's governing process. (See my column in the January 2007 issue.)

The unavoidable consequence of this is that the membership's natural leaders see this, lose respect for the governing process, and, accordingly, decline board service. Historically, the nominating committee has had to frequently pressure members to consider board service.

Accordingly, the GCSAA's ultimate challenge is to create a political environment that will encourage every member to seek and be proud of service to the association. The only way this is going to happen, however, is for the membership's political power base to stop playing politics and to bring a democratic voting process into play, as generally suggested within the following commentary.

THE NOMINATION PROCESS

For better or worse, the quality of an elected board will closely correlate with the quality of the nominating process that creates it. Accordingly, the keys to an effective nominating program are:

First and foremost, it's necessary to identify independent, knowledgeable groups that the board would appoint to the nominating committee each year. For example, the following sample group would serve as an effective model to emulate: the second removed GCSAA past president, current directors of the USGA Green Section, 15- to 20-year GCSAA members and qualified academics from the university system.

Next, and still foremost, is the important task of identifying who should serve on the nominating committee itself? Because effective board performance requires nothing less than a blue-ribbon panel to make these critical nominations, the nominating committee might consist of selections from the following categories of industry savvy people:

- the fifth removed GCSAA past president;
- 20- to 30-year GCSAA members;
- five year recent past chapter presidents;
- current and five-year recent members of the GCSAA Advisory Council; and
- 10-year recent past GCSAA board members.

BOARD ELIGIBILITY

The most effective way to ensure that board candidates possess leadership experience and qualities would be to allow only current

“Accordingly, the GCSAA's ultimate challenge is to create a political environment that will encourage every member to seek and be proud of service, to the association.”

and past chapter presidents to be eligible to serve on the GCSAA board of directors. Two sources of nominations would be accepted: (1) Chapter boards would be allowed to nominate only their own current or past presidents; and (2) any current or past chapter president would be allowed to nominate him or herself – provided he or she obtained the signatures of 50 percent of all chapter members eligible to vote, as

attested to by the chapter secretary.

All board recommendations would be submitted to the nominating committee in the form of an approximate three-minute electronic video to be prepared by each candidate that would present each candidate's resume, answers to FAQs and campaign initiatives. Chapters would pay up to a fixed amount for the production of their own candidates' videos, while self-nominated candidates would pay up to the same fixed amount to produce their own video productions.

To allow for proper due diligence, all submitted candidate videos would be forwarded electronically to each nominating committee member before the designated committee meeting date in Lawrence, Kan. Once this meeting convenes, the committee would nominate two or three candidates for each of the three board vacancies that occur each year. Final committee nominations would be announced to the general membership via a special purpose GCSAA election Web site that would link to each nominated candidate's video production.

THE VOTING PROCESS

At this point, candidate voting becomes the simple matter of allowing eligible members to gain one-time access to a national computerized election process via their unique member identification numbers. Officer voting becomes even a simpler task, i.e., the president and officers would be elected each year by the nine board members at their first meeting immediately following the general board elections. This in-house officer election process is used by virtually every one of the over 4,600 private golf clubs throughout the country because it allows the best informed to select the right people for the right job at the right time.

The real issue is whether GCSAA members care enough to vote? If present day indifference to voting continues, members will be denying their profession the recognition it requires to lead an industry while settling for a lifestyle that they will later look back on with some regret. **GCI**

Deer
Rabbits
Moles
Voles
Gophers
Geese

Good as gone.

Liquid Fence® animal repellents.

From the nation's number-one selling Deer & Rabbit Repellent to guaranteed effective Mole & Vole and Goose Repellents – Liquid Fence products will do for you what they've done for millions of satisfied customers... really work!



The Liquid Fence® Company

Call (800) 923-3623 www.liquidfence.com pro@liquidfence.com

LIQUID FENCE
PRO
DIVISION

Always read and follow label directions.

www.golfcourseindustry.com/readerservice #22



Robert A. Milligan, Ph.D., is professor emeritus from Cornell University and senior consultant with Madison, Wis.-based Dairy Strategies. He can be reached at 651-647-0495 or rmilligan@trsmith.com.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The following are Peter Spring's thoughts after completing an interview for the mechanic position at Hills and Valleys Golf Course:

"Wow! That wasn't what I expected.

When George (the golf course superintendent) invited me to the interview, he said to come to the course at 10 a.m. I arrived a few minutes early, but no one was at the clubhouse. By the time I found the maintenance facility, I was late. George was understanding, but I was more nervous. We made small talk about George knowing my father from regional church work. He asked if I belonged to the same church as my father.

"Then George said we should start.

Recalling my two previous interviews, I was expecting a formal, structured meeting. Instead, George started: "I made some notes for the interview. Let me see if I can find them." Then the phone rang, and he talked on the phone for a few minutes. Then we talked about the job for about 15 minutes. George asked a couple general questions but never found his notes. It felt more like an unstructured discussion than an interview. As the interview was ending, I had to interject to ask my questions.

"I realized I didn't find out or ask about what I should expect next. I have no idea if or when I'll hear anything or whether I should take the position if it were offered."

Although the above is fiction, I've heard each component from employees interviewing for jobs at golf courses. Spring's thoughts can be used to address three key interviewing issues: (1) The superintendent's preparation for the interview is crucial; (2) thoughtful, structured interview questions are necessary; and (3) be aware of legal issues when interviewing.

I can relate to George's initial problem. When visiting superintendents, I've often spent much time locating maintenance facilities or their offices. Making certain a candidate knows exactly where to be and what to expect is the first step of preparation.

Before proceeding, reflect on the interview. Think about your interview experiences. I suspect they were stressful, you were nervous, the outcome would have a major impact on your career, and you wanted as much clarity as possible in an uncertain process. The candidates you interview are in the same situation. Here are ideas to ensure you're prepared for an interview:

- Recognize this is an important, stressful event and formality is needed.
- Construct a schedule for the interview including time to establish rapport, sell the position and course, ask interview questions, respond to the candidate's questions, tour the maintenance facility and course, and meet other course personnel.
- Make certain candidates understand what to expect – anything they should bring or prepare; interview time (beginning and end), location, schedule and format; and appropriate dress.
- Greet candidates upon arrival and devote your undivided attention during the interview – you only have one chance to make a first impression. Make a great impression. You don't want the candidate you choose to turn you down. Answering the phone call in the scenario above was inappropriate.
- Make certain candidates know what to expect when they leave the interview. What is the next step, and when will it come?

A prepared set of questions to be asked of all candidates is recommended by all interviewing experts and practitioners. The only point of dispute is the advisability of asking follow-up questions to pursue points raised in the answer. I suggest limiting follow-up questions. The best way to reduce the need for follow-up questions is a well-designed set of questions. Consider the following points:

1. An essential starting point is to identify what will enable success in the position. This means identifying competencies needed to succeed. Then write questions for each competency.
2. Many have a tendency to ask ques-

tions that begin with, "What would you do if ...?" Experience shows better questions begin with, "Tell me about the last time this happened" Instead of asking "What would you do if you were going to be late for work?" ask "What did you do the last time you knew you were going to be late for work?" These are behavioral questions.

Equal employment opportunity laws bar any business or organization from making human resource decisions based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, physical and mental handicap, pregnancy, age or military veteran status. Here are three points to guide you:

1. A general guideline is to ask only about things unquestionably related to the job and the applicant's ability to succeed in it. If the interview questions concern work experience, knowledge and skills required for the position, and attitudes and behaviors required to succeed in the position, illegal questions won't be needed or useful.

2. Avoiding illegal questions is difficult when writing questions about attitudes. The key is to identify the desired attitude rather than attributes that are positively correlated with the attribute.

3. Information about equal opportunity issues should be limited to formal interview questions. During the interview cited above, George asked Peter if he belonged to the same church as his father. This is an illegal question. Interviews require time to relax and build rapport with the applicant, but no part of the interview can include informal talk completely.

The following are questions that are or could be illegal:

- "What organizations, clubs or societies do you belong to?"
- "Can you provide a photograph of yourself?"
- "What arrangements have you made for childcare?"
- "Have you ever been arrested?"

Successful interviewing is a simple formula: Preparation plus structured questions minus illegal questions. Remember this whenever you're hiring, and you'll be better off. **GCI**



Take The ROOTS® Challenge

And See The Difference

The ROOTS® Challenge provides season-long turf management solutions using premier ROOTS plant performance products for the healthiest turf possible – even in the most stressful conditions.

This comprehensive turf management approach gives your turf the right blend of microbes, biostimulants and nutrients for better

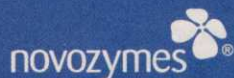
- Root development
- Stress tolerance
- Soil and plant health
- Nutrient efficiency



Your distributor representative, ROOTS territory manager and technical field staff will work with you to select the best program, monitor the applications and gauge the total program effectiveness throughout the season.

So, take the ROOTS Challenge and see the difference for yourself. Call your ROOTS distributor or go to www.rootsinc.com for details, today.

roots® ... Our Name Says It All



Read and follow all label directions. The Novozymes logo, ROOTS, AGRIplex, EcoGuard, endoROOTS, Fe 8%, KCS, TurfVigor and 1-2-3 are trademarks of Novozymes A/S. ©2007 Novozymes Biologicals, Inc.

www.golfcourseindustry.com/readerservice - #23



Golf course construction summary

(as of 1/28/2007)

Type	Under construction*			Completed*		
	9-hole	18-hole	Total	9-hole	18-hole	Total
New Facilities						
Daily Fee	39	118	157	1	3	4
Municipal	7	12	19	0	0	0
Private	13	63	76	0	1	1
Total	59	193	252	1	4	5
Additions						
Daily fee	83	6	89	1	0	1
Municipal	4	1	5	0	0	0
Private	14	6	20	0	0	0
Total	101	13	114	1	0	1
Grand total	160	206	366	2	4	6

* Figures do not include courses classified as Reconstructions. [45] 9-hole and [79] 18-hole reconstructed courses were under construction and [1] 9-hole and [2] 18-hole reconstructed courses opened.

Source: National Golf Foundation

Experience factors

Ever wonder what the golfers who play at your course care about and what aspects of the golfing experience are more important than others? Well, here are 14 core factors of the National Golf Foundation's Golfer Survey Program (in no particular order). How does your facility rank with your golfers in these areas?

1. Overall value
2. Convenience of course location
3. Tee-time availability
4. Overall course conditions
5. Condition of greens
6. Scenery and aesthetics of course
7. Pace of play
8. Condition of golf cars
9. Amenities (clubhouse, pro shop, locker room)
10. Friendliness/service of staff
11. Food-and-beverage service
12. On-course services (restrooms, drinking water)
13. Overall experience
14. Affordability



QUOTABLES

"You don't have to be certified to be successful, but you need to carry yourself with the respect the profession deserves. As superintendents, we don't do that as a whole. We don't carry ourselves like the professionals we are." - **Tom Lavrenz**, director of golf for the city of Cedar Rapids Golf Department in Iowa

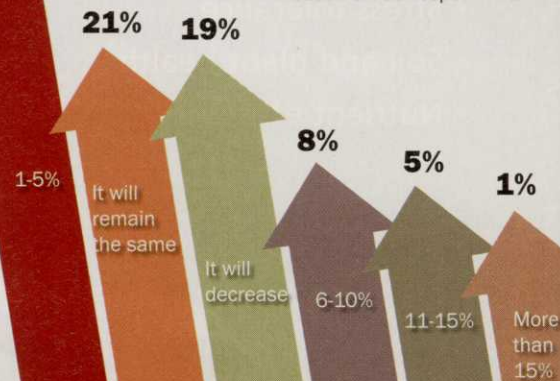
"The GCSAA is showing the value of Class A to owners. It has promised the membership that the Class A designation sets them apart from their peers. The GCSAA doesn't say that about CGCS." - **Darren Davis**, director of golf at Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples

"It's very sad to see the level of care of maintenance facilities out there. Some are professional. Many are messy. It doesn't take much money to show that you are proud of where you work." - **Scott Nair**, golf course superintendent at Kukio Beach Club in Kona, Hawaii

46%

How much will your golf course maintenance budget increase from 2006 to 2007?

based on 85 respondents





Respect My Authority.

The Turf Guard Fence from Standard Golf

Lay down the law with the Standard Golf Turf Guard Fence. Don't get tangled up with ropes, stakes, spikes and pegs. A simple, lightweight design makes transportation a breeze while its durable, powder-coated

steel rod finish stands up to the elements. With a highly visible bright yellow finish and the capacity to hang warning signs, you can keep your players alert to closings and keep golf course traffic in line.

For toll-free express service, call **1-866-SG-EXPRESS** (1-866-743-9773)

STANDARD
GOLF COMPANY

We've Got It All.

the man behind the **Curtain**

Frans Jager explains the benefits of working with small independent distributors

Chances are you've never heard of Frans Jager. You'll probably draw a blank on the name of his organization, too. But odds are you're doing business with them indirectly, and you don't even know it.

Jager runs PrimeraTurf, a cooperative group of more than 40 smaller independent turf distributors throughout the nation. It helps little distributors act like big companies via collective bargaining power.

After a long career in the fertilizer business in Europe and America, Jager took over purchasing for LESCO in 1992. For eight years, he was the go-to guy for the chemical, seed, fertilizer and equipment manufacturers who wanted to do business with the 800-pound gorilla of turf distribution. He was the behind-the-scenes person who helped orchestrate a key part of the entire golf/turf supply chain. But, LESCO's financial and management troubles led him to part ways with the company around the new millennium.

A few years before that, the first professional products distribution cooperative called Prokoz had been created, and more than a dozen larger independent turf distributors joined to try to get the same pricing as the big boys. But many smaller companies had been shut out by Prokoz and were attempting to form a second group of their own. Thus, at the GCSAA show in Dallas in 2001, Jager sat down with a handful of distributor owners and agreed to head up a new group to be called PrimeraTurf. He's been running the co-op ever since.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION AND TYPICAL MEMBERS.

PrimeraTurf had been created in 2000 by three independent distributors from Virginia. That time was probably the peak of the belief that the national buying model would drive the independents out of business. And many independents failed at that point already.

The key issue was access to products at a competitive price. Most of the small independents didn't have a contract with the major chemical companies who controlled the market through patents. They had to buy through a dealer (Helena, Terra, etc.). The manufacturers liked it that way because it was simple and they just had a few people to deal with. The independents couldn't stay competitive because they had to buy from the people they sold against (dealers).

It took PrimeraTurf a while to grow into something that had substance. We now have 42 members, most of which are relatively small, family-run distribution companies that have been selling soft goods to golf courses, sports facilities and lawn care operators in their communities for decades. Typically, they have the local expertise, they're dedicated to their customers, they have everything they own tied up in their business, and they're passionate about the market.

The only criterion for joining PrimeraTurf is that we want it to be a co-op of true independents. That means it's independently owned and the owner has to be actively engaged in the business. Our members give the end user a choice of dealing with large

national companies or the local guy.

YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE WAL-MART VERSUS MAIN STREET U.S.A.

There are similarities, but in our business, Main Street U.S.A. has been kicking Wal-Mart's butt the past few years.

WHY?

Local service and knowledge and long-term relationships between salespeople and customers. This is a relationship-driven market, and independents tend to be better at building and maintaining those relationships. PrimeraTurf's role is to help preserve the local distributors in the golf market by creating a level playing field in terms of pricing.

WHY DO YOUR MEMBERS SEEM TO FOCUS ON GOLF AS OPPOSED TO SOME OTHER PARTS OF THE GREEN INDUSTRY?

Golf is a desirable market because it's the epitome of relationship-driven selling, and that's what the independents are good at. The large lawn care business is extremely competitive and has become a direct business mainly.

WHY DO MOST MEMBERS SPECIALIZE IN SOFT GOODS RATHER THAN IRON?

Almost all of our members sell chemicals, fertilizer and seed but with different emphases. Many of our companies have 'seed' in their names, and that was the basis for their creation. Seed has pretty much stayed out of the hands of the nationals, so it's been the