

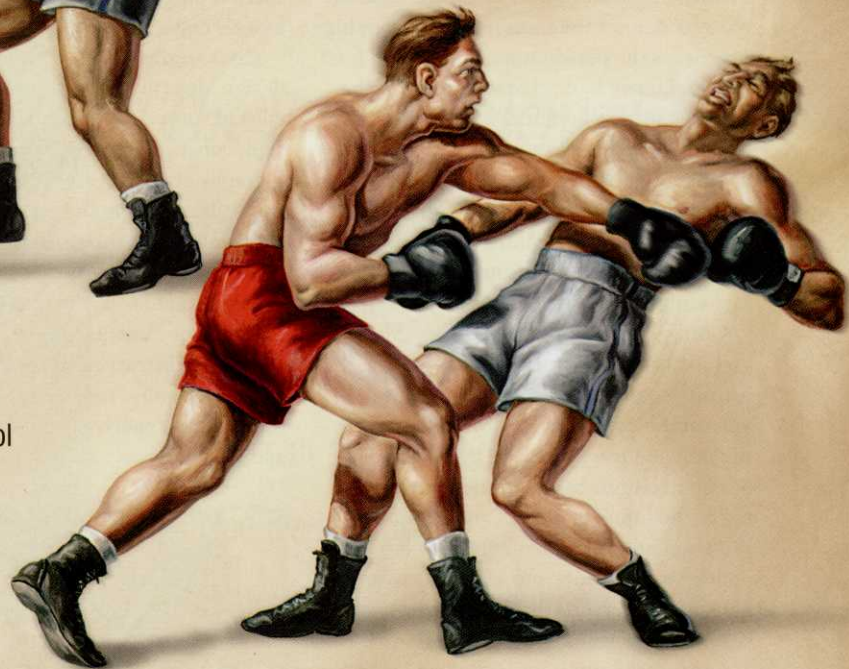
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Harmony In Growth



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@jeffreymbrauer.com.

DEFINING AN ARCHITECT

In previous columns, I've written about professional golfers being called golf course architects. Alert readers know I don't consider most of them architects, which begs the question, "What's a golf course architect?"

The American Society of Golf Course Architects defines the term in its membership process as the person most responsible for the final form, look, character, etc., of the golf course via the routing, plans and field work. The architect must possess a unique combination of artistry, engineering, knowledge, training and experience in all (or most) of the disciplines required to take an idea from concept through construction, including:

Golf, golfers and golf history – Most architects study historic golf courses to learn the game's strategies, shot values and subtleties. We know how it's played by the best and the worst. We make realistic design decisions based on the understanding of the limits of players and equipment. We also know club members and club politics well through our experiences and help guide everyone involved through an emotional process.

Landscape architecture – Architects are often trained in landscape architecture, which has close parallels to golf course design, including land sculpture to create visually appealing courses. Aesthetically pleasing courses are most likely designed by someone with rare God-given artistic flare who chooses to apply that flare to golf course architecture. It's difficult to put a dollar value on artistic flare, but it's a necessary part of great golf design that most people don't have.

A professional design also means creating a technically sound golf course with properly built greens, tees and bunkers, effective drainage and turf, proper safety buffers, good circulation and dozens of other items that few golfers realize are important but which must be incorporated into the design seamlessly.

In addition to basic design skills, golf course architecture requires substantial knowledge in areas such as:

Environmental science – Well-designed courses are compatible with nature, properly feature and preserve natural landscape surroundings, and meet stringent environmental codes and regulations.

Civil engineering – Translating great design ideas into reality requires knowledge of surveying, land planning, site design, construction regulations, aerial photography and topographic maps, irrigation hydraulics, pumps and piping systems. The old axiom of "drainage, drainage, drainage" applies, and golf course architects can plan drainage that keeps the course in play and meets environmental guidelines. Even cart paths – so distracting and yet so integral to modern golf – require experience and thought to properly lay out for aesthetics and convenience.



Agronomy – An architect must provide a golf course superintendent with the right tools in terms of irrigation, drainage and soil mixes to provide optimum conditions, and must understand agronomy and water quality.

Cost estimating – Sooner or later, a project comes down to money. Using knowledge gained from past projects and specific plans and specifications for a project, an architect can present realistic budgets nec-

essary to obtain adequate financing, often with great accuracy early in the process.

Contracts, plans and specifications

– Few businesspeople would undertake multimillion dollar ventures without proper contracts, and golf course construction is no different. Golf course architects create detailed plans and specifications covering all phases of golf construction to protect a club's interests. They assist with negotiating the best possible terms and price with contractors who have more experience in these contracts than a typical club.

Project management and construction – Proposing designs that can be built cost effectively and regular construction monitoring for quality control require an understanding of golf construction components, including heavy earthmoving. To minimize down time and optimize grassing windows, project scheduling also is critical to success.

While great players, average players, superintendents, club managers, historians, committee members, contractors and suppliers can make valuable contributions to golf course development, all have limited perspectives, and none has the aforementioned skills. Through professional training and experience, architects use those inputs to create realistic, quality and long-lasting designs and construction specifications that work well in all aspects, either using their own design ideas or acting as the musical conductor to orchestrate the members of the band to move the project in the right direction.

It's difficult to measure, but architects earn their fees by avoiding mistakes or unsatisfactory designs that often require rebuilding, providing competitive bids from contractors to assure the lowest qualified price and monitoring construction to assure the client gets all he paid for. It's more likely the client will enjoy years of trouble-free golf and spend less money long term.

The best way to save money is to use a golf course architect to design and head a construction project, rather than saving design fees and paying later for unsatisfactory designs and construction projects. **GCI**

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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@roadrunner.com or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

FAILING THE MISSION STATEMENT

Through the years, I've visited more than a few GCSAA affiliated chapters delivering educational programming of one sort or another.

Invariably, in recent years (including this year), I've been approached by a chapter board member or two and asked whether I was seeing what they're seeing: chapter members' growing indifference to supporting chapter and GCSAA programming?

When I ask what's the evidence supporting these observations, I'm told indicators are declining membership development and diminished interest and participation in formerly well-received programs such as local education, national certification, tournaments, social events and fund-raising.

My answer to the original question, asked on each occasion, has been yes. I've also seen this same pattern for several years through dozens of interactions with chapter and GCSAA members. When you discuss the plausible reasons why these situations have developed with chapter leaders, it quickly becomes clear there are justifiable reasons for the growing member indifference. For example:

- While an old continuing story, few things bother GCSAA members more than knowing about 80 percent of PGA and CMAA members enjoy the benefit of written contract security but GCSAA members don't.

- Because the chapters are the political power base of the association and wish to maintain control over GCSAA elections, they've been able to discourage individual member voting for some time – only one in 1,000 eligible members vote individually in GCSAA elections each year. (A recent GCI electronic poll showed 76 percent of GCSAA members voting want the opportunity to vote as individuals.)

- Because of the limited program development experience of the GCSAA boards and staff through the years, a long list of

necessary precedent setting educational programming doesn't get into the developmental pipeline.

- Members don't respect the manner in which board members' enjoy a lifestyle well above that of the membership (i.e., expensive family travel and cash perks) when no other organization in golf, including the PGA and CMAA, does this.

- The GCSAA board's long-standing lack of transparency offends many members. For example, board-meeting minutes (with voting records) are no longer published, and the right to have access to pertinent fiscal data and policy-making discussions are denied to members. How, then, can GCSAA members vote responsibly to reelect board members or elevate board members to officerships when the voting records of then-serving board members are also denied to the membership?

... association policy ... has been designed throughout the years to dumb down the membership and deny it any influential role?

- Members are discouraged because the GCSAA bylaws deny the membership of any opportunity to influence board nominations or to hold boards accountable for their actions.

Is there any wonder why member apathy is spreading throughout the GCSAA when persistent association policy, as described above, has been designed through the years to dumb down the membership and deny it any influential role?

While I readily concede the present and recent GCSAA boards haven't been responsible for establishing this long-standing negative culture, the point must be made

these debilitating policies remain in place and can't be allowed to stand.

Perhaps, the best way to educate and convince the next and immediately following GCSAA boards they must accept the responsibility to change the present organization culture is measure to what degree existing policies support the GCSAA mission statement, which is:

"The GCSAA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession, and enhancing the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf."

I doubt veteran GCSAA members would give more than a "3" rating out of "10" for the quality and effectiveness of present GCSAA performance when measured against the noble intentions as expressed within this mission statement. I don't suggest this low rating to embarrass anyone, but you can't fix what you don't know is broken. The GCSAA mission statement isn't broken, but the association's commitment to serve its membership and to advance a profession is.

The two immediate board objectives that would effectively begin to right the ship (after bringing in a proven program development capability on board) are:

- Quickly jumping on the painful, family debilitating, but very addressable lack of written contract issue (see my October 2007 GCI column); and

- Immediately establishing the policy of presenting board meeting minutes (with voting records) on the GCSAA Web site. Nothing will earn the trust of the membership more effectively than transparent board performance.

I can't imagine a GCSAA board that wouldn't welcome this unique opportunity to serve its membership in a more profound way.

While the coming 2008-09 GCSAA board can't be held accountable for what has transpired in the past, it's being put on notice by the membership that it will be held accountable for the degree to which it supports membership rights and how effectively it restores confidence in, and respect for, the association's mission statement. **GCI**



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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.

HIRING RIGHT REQUIRES PLANNING

“I can’t find good help!” I hear this all too often from golf course superintendents and managers. Hiring is often difficult and frustrating. (Actually not unlike looking for a job.)

During the 20 years I’ve worked with superintendents, I’ve never heard one exclaim: “I can’t grow excellent turf!” It’s not because growing excellent turf is easy. Superintendents grow well-conditioned turf because it’s their job and they work year round planning it.

Similarly, hiring is an integral part of a superintendent’s position. Those who successfully hire great employees have a hiring plan and work year round at it. Successful hiring also makes growing healthy turf easier. A hiring plan includes preparation, recruitment and selection. Here are some suggestions for creating a hiring plan:

Be a preferred employer. Think about how you attract new golfers or members. You probably advertise, but the image or reputation of your facility is central to successful advertising. A good product or service is easier to market than a crummy one.

So, what’s the image of your facility and maintenance staff as a place to work? Just like advertising a product or service, hiring is easier with a great image or reputation as a place to work. We call such a facility a preferred employer.

How do you become a preferred employer? Just as successful advertising of the course starts with a great course, the key to being a preferred employer is being a great place to work. This means creating a work environment and team spirit that results in employees with superior productivity and extraordinary job satisfaction. This, like growing well-conditioned turf, is a year-round job.

Build your hiring plan around competencies. The reason for hiring is to have employees who are productive, who succeed. Those successful characteristics are

called competencies – the combination of experience, skills, knowledge, performance behaviors, and personal attributes and attitudes that contribute to employee success. Based on my experience working with superintendents and a recent visit with a local superintendent, an example set of competencies for a maintenance staff position are reliability, identifiable successes and a willingness to learn.

Because most maintenance employees begin with little or no directly relevant experience, the identifiable success competency is a record of success in whatever the candidate has done – school, other positions, volunteer work, etc.

Recruitment. The goal of recruiting is to reach and persuade a large number of qualified candidates to apply for the position that’s open. When a company advertises – let’s use Subway as an example – it promotes the positive attributes of its sandwiches, convenience and quality ingredients with the objective that potential customers will purchase its sandwiches.

Similarly, with recruiting, employers promote the positive attributes of their facilities and open positions. With recruiting, employers provide more detailed information about what will enable a potential candidate to succeed in the position – the competencies.

Sadly, positive attributes are lacking in most recruitment materials I read. Recently, I was teaching a seminar for superintendents, and they had difficulty moving past a concern that they couldn’t offer a competitive wage. Compensation is important but not nearly as important as most think. Do superintendents enter the profession for

the money? Take the time to brainstorm the positives about working on a golf course maintenance crew. Some include:

- Working outdoors;
- Operating modern equipment;
- Completing a work day by mid-afternoon;
- Having a regular schedule;
- Being part of a small, close-knit team;
- Learning new skills;
- Taking advantage of opportunities for advancement;
- Working with an experienced supervisor;
- Gaining work experience; and
- Playing golf.

Include the aforementioned positives in a job announcement, want ad or Internet job service for recruitment. An example is:

“Scenic, local golf course – Successful Valley Golf Course – seeks reliable individuals for seasonal, full-time golf course maintenance positions. Experience isn’t necessary. Applicants must have a record of success in school, previous jobs or volunteer activities and be eager to learn. Our valued employees work as a team with state-of-the-art machinery. They’re supervised by knowledgeable, skilled managers. Spend a summer with us. Work hard, play some golf and leave much better prepared for your next position. Call or apply at ...”

Note the inclusion of the competencies and positives of the Successful Valley Golf Course.

Selection. A planned, professional selection procedure highlighted by an excellent interview is necessary to complete a year-round plan to hire excellent employees successfully. **GCI**



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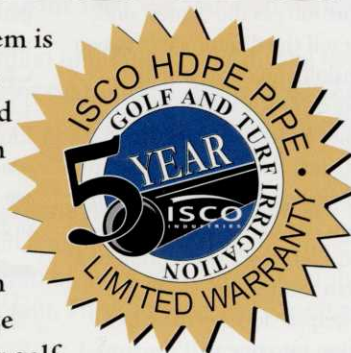
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Steven Tucker is the equipment manager at the Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla., and the president of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association. He can be reached at 941-309-2913 or stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com.

RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

On Sept. 1, 2006, 12 equipment technicians met by conference call to discuss starting an equipment technicians association. During that call, we decided this type of association was long overdue and it would be increasingly necessary for the development of the equipment technician position.

The equipment technician's role during the past 20 years has developed into much more than just a person on the staff who keeps equipment operational. With the increasing number of golf courses throughout the world, there aren't enough skilled technicians to meet the needs of every course. There are many reasons for this, however, we believe lack of awareness of the career opportunity is the biggest one.

How can you tell the difference between a skilled and unskilled technician? Is it the way he looks or dresses? Is it how quickly he can get a piece of equipment up and running? Is it the organizational or management skills he possesses? Unfortunately, there's no standard for measuring effectiveness, so everyone's perception of a skilled technician is different.

The GCSAA helped develop the superintendent position into one that's matured throughout the years. Superintendents as a whole have taken on more responsibility and, in turn, have gained much more respect.

It's for these reasons an equipment technicians association is being developed. An equipment technician is responsible for all the equipment that maintains the golf course daily and has a duty to make sure every member and guest experiences a golf course that's in beautiful condition every day. The position technicians hold can help determine whether a customer returns to the golf course to play again or if it's the last time he sees the golf course. In short, equipment technicians help support the revenue flow to the golf course.

On Jan. 1, 2007, the membership of the International Golf Course Equipment

Managers Association elected its first set of officers and board of the association. The board consists of equipment managers and technicians from throughout the world who've experienced many types of challenges in the industry. With the formation of committees, the association is able to have many more individuals worldwide – from industry leaders to assistant technicians – so everyone has the opportunity to assist expanding the knowledge and professional image of every technician, from the high-end private clubs to the small-town public facilities and distributors.

During the past year, the IGCEMA has achieved many things. We've hired legal counsel and an accountant to assure our path to provide a strong platform for coming years is legal and consistent. The IGCEMA officially became IGCEMA Inc. Oct. 12, 2007. We also joined the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Association's road show this year in South Africa where we taught three seminars about how to organize a workshop.

The number of technicians in our industry is declining quickly and isn't keeping up with demand.

The IGCEMA has continued to progress – it has membership in nine countries, and most recently, has been recognized by the R&A on its best practices Web site (www.bestcourseforgolfcourse.org) as an international organization.

Many of these achievements wouldn't be possible without the overwhelming support we've been given by the equipment manufacturers, superintendent/greenkeeper associations and the technicians throughout the world who've embraced the



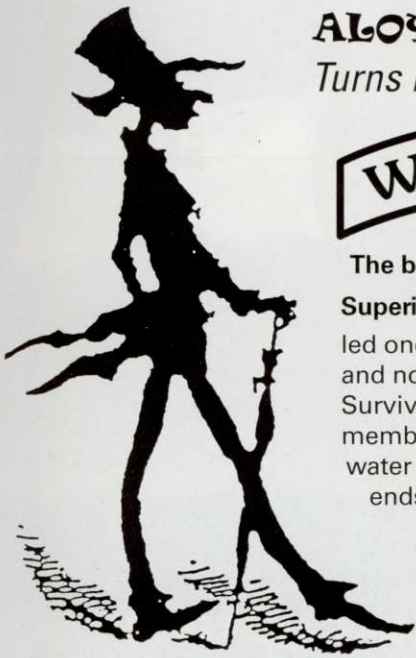
association and want it to succeed. Despite the many accomplishments during our one year of existence, we have many more strides to make.

The IGCEMA has many things planned: a certification program; exhibiting at the Golf Industry Show; launching our environmental initiative and continuing to add local technician associations as affiliates to our organization, among others. We'll also make a big push to increase awareness of the association in the industry to help increase membership.

Another key focus will be encouraging more technicians to work at golf courses. The number of technicians in our industry is declining quickly and isn't keeping up with demand. Many colleges in the U.S. are struggling to attract students who are interested in being equipment technicians. While the equipment technician job has changed throughout the years, the IGCEMA would like to have it recognized as an important and rewarding career. This is no easy task, but if it's not addressed, it will hurt golf in the U.S. and abroad.

For the IGCEMA to make these strides, the industry needs to understand the value of equipment technicians, which is an integral part of the success of a golf course management team. Professionalism, standards, education and achievement should be recognized, nurtured and respected.

It's the goal of the IGCEMA to develop this idea and expand it worldwide. Doing so will encourage others to enter the profession. We intend to work with superintendent associations and manufacturers to develop this association and profession into one that gains the respect and recognition that's long overdue and much needed. **GCI**



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SUPERINTENDENTS SPEAK OUT ON WATER SAVINGS

- 1980** "...During 1980, I treated one green with SURFSIDE 37. We syringed the treated green a couple of times during the season, the rest of the greens required over 50 days of syringing... that one SURFSIDE 37 green was incredible! During 1981, we treated all the greens, and only had to syringe a handful of times - maybe a dozen times all summer - and most of that was on the high spots. **80% to 85% reduction** in syringing during the past ten years has meant **major water and labor savings...**"
- 1983** "...We use city water - we're on a meter. Based on comparable figures for 1980, **we reduced water use by 20% in 1983...**"
- 1985** "...This year we would water Friday night, and then wouldn't water again until Sunday night. We **used 30% less water...** didn't syringe once this year...just didn't need it! When we first went on water restrictions, **SURFSIDE 37 kept our fairways alive** during that long July/August stretch. **You can use it anytime...it doesn't matter how hot it is.** We held our worst fairway with a total of 5 gals. per acre..."
- 1988** "... With SURFSIDE and our hand-watering program, we only **water greens two times a week.** We required **50% to 70% less water** on greens than when I arrived two and a half years ago. We spike and top dress the greens every two weeks, and apply SURFSIDE 37 following these cultural procedures. We also Hydroject ten of our twenty greens each week from April until September. We use the SURFSIDE PELLETS on the hose via the Hydroject. This works great in getting the product into the root zone. SURFSIDE 37 is a vital part of our turf management program..."
- 1993** "... **I saved more than 90% of my syringe labor budget.** Afternoon watering was basically eliminated. During the summer of 1993 we syringed less than ten times in the afternoons. During the summer of 1994 we only had to syringe two afternoons. SURFSIDE 37 has **helped eliminate hard to wet areas;** by treating the entire green complex, water movement through the soil has been improved. This has **decreased the need for daily irrigation,** and **nearly eliminates the need to syringe during the day.** **We have saved our operation over \$7,000 per year in labor costs** during the summers of 1993 and 1994..."

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Successful business tips

Bob Higby, president of Independent AgriBusiness Professionals, spoke about what it takes for a business to be successful at an Independent Turf & Ornamental Distributors Association meeting in October. Service is key, but the biggest challenge for most companies is differentiating themselves from competition. The following are some of Higby's tips for success for distributors and manufacturers. Superintendents might benefit from a few of these, too.

- **Retain** qualified people, beginning with the owner's commitment.
- **Empower** employees.
- Have an **open-door management policy** with all employees.
- Make sure employees are aware of their **roles in the company's success**.
- Strive for very **little turnover**. As a result, customers see the same person regularly, and employees know customers' likes and dislikes and can build relationships more easily.
- **Meet regularly** with personnel.
 - Service people should **wear a uniform** with a name on it so customers know who that person is, what he does right or wrong, and what company he works for.
 - Focus on selling **marketing solutions** rather than products.
 - **Focus on your business**, not the competition.
 - Offer **competitive compensation/performance** packages. Pay for performance based on profit, not gross sales.
 - Sales reports should enable analysis and **inventory controls**.



Synthetic turf option

Synthetic turf is a viable option for tee boxes on driving ranges at public and private facilities. When debating whether to install synthetic turf, consider these five points:

- 1. Frequency of use.** Turf that doesn't wear out as fast as natural turf is attractive for busy driving ranges. Most facilities, especially in the Northeast, shut down ranges by December and, generally, don't reopen them until March or April. With synthetic turf tee boxes, ranges can stay open year round without maintenance downtime and are ready for practice on those rare 60-degree days in January.
- 2. Maintenance.** If you're spending too much time and money reseeding the range, consider switching to synthetic turf, the maintenance of which is almost nothing. A leaf blower is needed to clear any surface debris, and a "no chewing gum" rule is a good idea because it's not easy removing gum once it's embedded in the turf.
- 3. Durability.** Synthetic turf tee boxes can be used more often for longer periods of time. Because synthetic turf isn't at the mercy of inclement weather, superintendents can maintain the integrity of the range while reducing maintenance costs.
- 4. Turf composition.** There are two viable options when selecting fiber and infill. The first is to install a strong, durable polypropylene fiber that can be filled in with sand. The second is a durable, abrasive, dense nylon blade that will stand up to wear and tear. Sand infill isn't necessary with dense nylon tee box turf.
- 5. Drainage.** When tee box lines are spread across a larger surface area, it's useful to implement a drainage system to ensure quick water removal. A stone base composed of two to three inches of a larger, crushed stone measuring three-quarters of an inch is recommended. That layer is topped off with a 2-inch layer of a finer, angular stone followed by a fill of stone dust. The entire stone base then gets compacted with a vibratory plate or roller to give the turf a precise level base.

Source: Sprinturf, a designer and installer of synthetic turf systems in Wayne, Pa.