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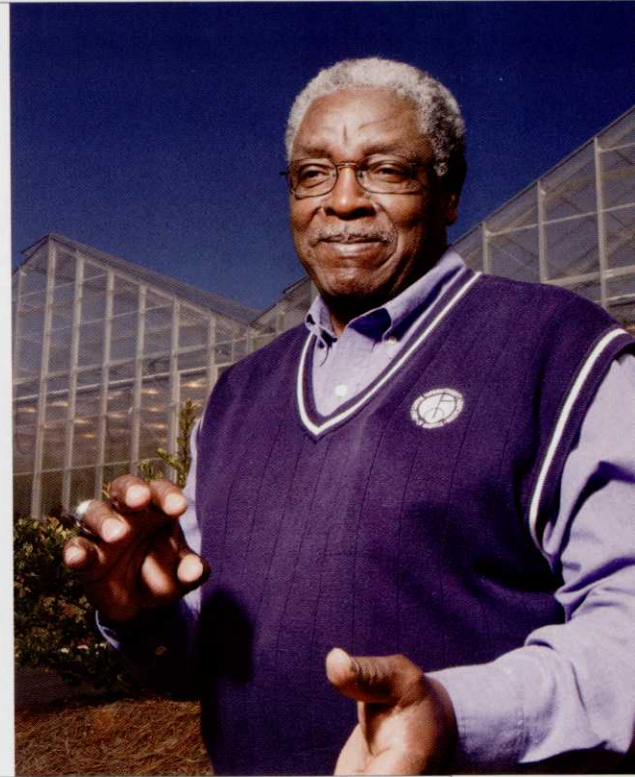


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**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

Ronald Calhoun, Ph.D., a specialist in Michigan State University's department of crop and soil sciences, suggests determining the types and causes of weeds before reaching for an easy herbicide solution.

**AIR IT OUT**

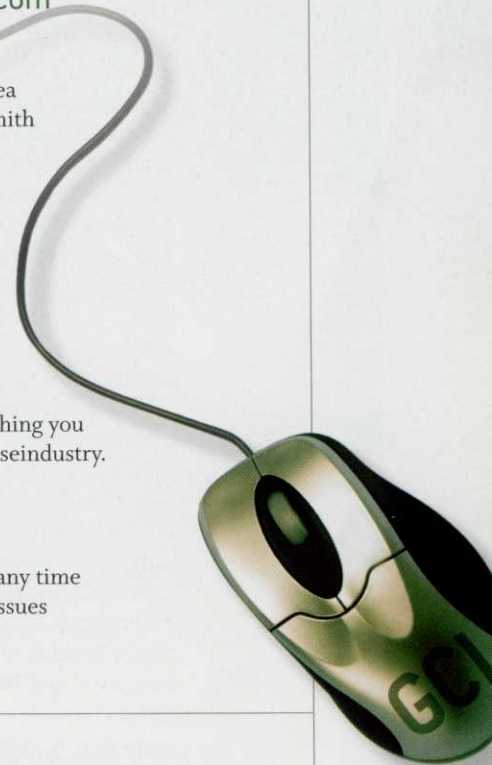
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**EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:**

*Golf Course Industry* reports on and analyzes the business of maintaining golf courses, as well as the broader business of golf course management. This includes three main areas: agronomy, business management and career development as it relates to golf course superintendents and those managers responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset. *Golf Course Industry* shows superintendents what's possible, helps them understand why it's important and tells them how to take the next step.





**John Walsh**  
Editor

## THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS

**P**olitics are annoying. There's too much bickering, pandering and hot air to withstand for any length of time. Politics also can be entertaining, much like watching a sporting event. You cheer and root for the person you want to win as he or she delivers snappy rebuttals during televised debates. Politics might be annoying and entertaining, but they're also important because they impact people's lives and how businesses operate.

Politics have been dominating the news lately because it's primary season. The media analyze each and every word of the candidates like they actually mean something. They like to predict winners, too. Despite the media buzz, I often ask, "What are the details?" and "Where's the substance?" as politicians drone on about changing the country by implementing their new policies. Campaign speeches are examples of the familiar saying, "all sizzle and no steak."

Many politicians – not all (it seems the good politicians rarely last on the scene and understandably leave to enter the private sector) – are power hungry and egocentric. They claim to want to help citizens and better the country, but it's difficult to believe them most of the time because they don't seem genuine. Come to think of it, politicians are the antithesis of golf course superintendents – something of which you should be proud.

So, being an election year, we'll soon vote for the 44th president of the United States. For most informed, logical voters, it comes down to two candidates – the Democratic party nominee and the Republican party nominee – even though there are more than two choices. For many, no candidate is ideal, and they vote for who's considered to be the lesser of two evils.

In the context of these political musings, think about the golf industry and its use of people, pesticides, fertilizers, water and land and juxtapose that with legislation the Democratic and Republican parties have sponsored and passed into law. Democrats tend to promote expanding the federal government and implementing tax-burdening philosophies, and Republicans tend to promote shrinking the federal government and futhering pro-business policies. It's clear which party's policies, in general, benefit the golf industry more.

During the next seven months, we're going to see shifts in the political landscape from our TVs, newspapers and computers. Voters are going to form more educated opinions about the candidates. Recently, I've talked to some in the industry who already are preparing and planning for what they view as the worst – a Democratic president who won't be kind to the business interests of the golf industry – with chemical/fertilizer and environmental regulations being the two biggies. Taxes, economic policies and immigration are a few other issues that come to mind. Granted, Republican-driven immigration reform might be more damaging to certain golf course businesses than a Democratic-driven one, but I think we all can agree law and order is much needed in that area.

Those in the golf industry who intend to vote for the Democratic party's nominee for president should ponder two questions: "Why is a Democratic president better than a Republican one when it comes to environmental policies that impact the golf business?" and "Why vote for the same candidate environmental activists vote for?" Like I said, neither realistic candidate is going to be ideal for many voters, but it's quite clear who the lesser of two evils will be for the golf industry. **GCI**

*John Walsh*

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



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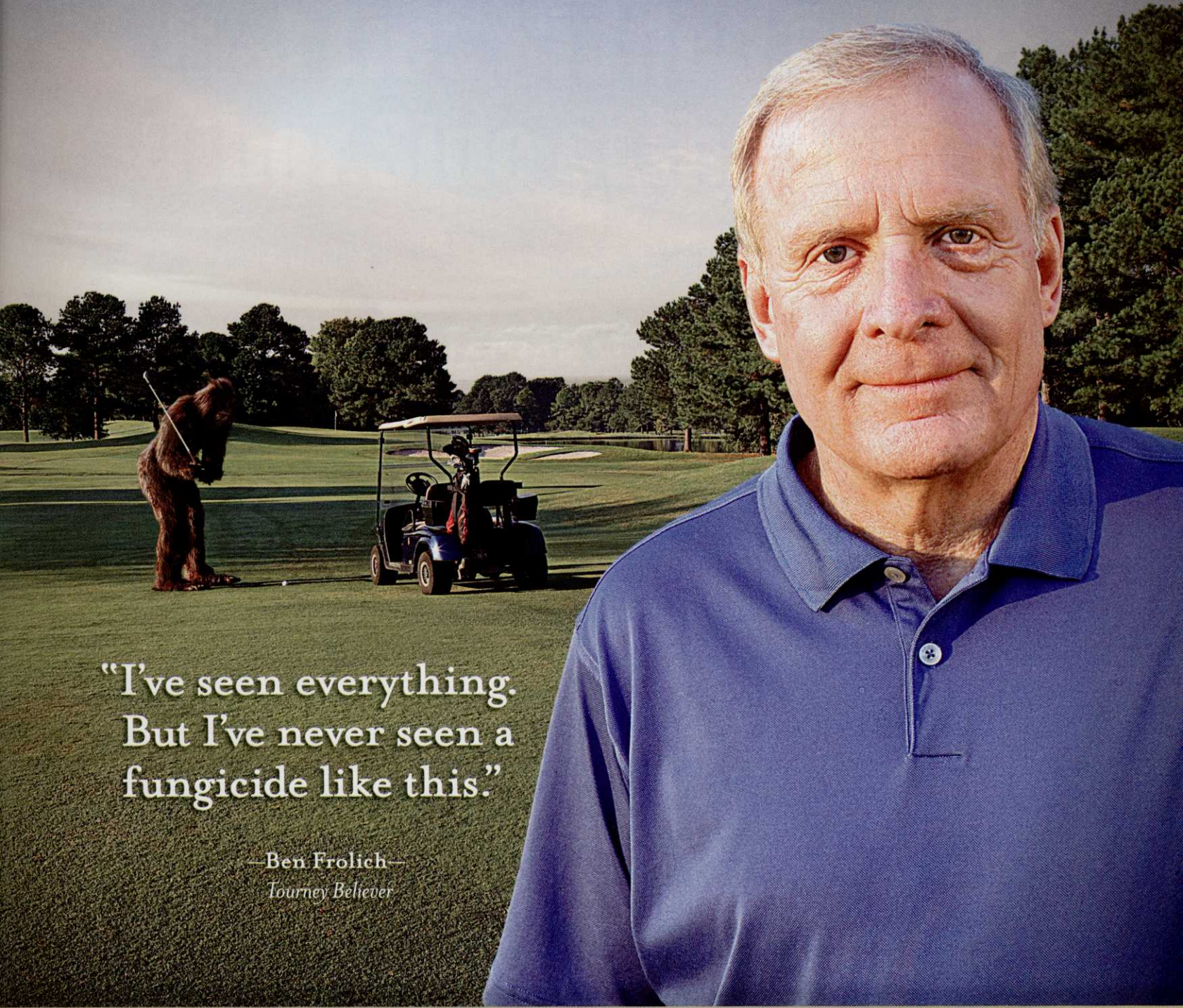
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 Lake Placid, N.Y.  
 Call 518-783-1229, or visit [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org).

April 24 - 25  
**FLORIDA SOD GROWERS COOPERATIVE 2008  
 FIELD DAY & TRADE SHOW**  
 Bethel Farms  
 Fort Pierce, Fla.  
 Call 863-675-2144, or visit  
[www.floridasodgrowers.com](http://www.floridasodgrowers.com).

May 23 - 30  
**OHIO TURFGRASS WEEK**  
 Call 888-683-3445, or visit  
[www.ohioturfgrass.org](http://www.ohioturfgrass.org).

June 18  
**UMASS TURF RESEARCH FIELD DAY**  
 UMass Joseph Troll Turf Research Center  
 South Deerfield, Mass.  
 Call 508-892-0382, or visit  
[www.umassturf.org](http://www.umassturf.org).

July 10  
**UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY TURF  
 RESEARCH FIELD DAY**  
 UK's Spindletop Research Farm  
 Lexington, Ky.  
 Visit [www.uky.edu/Ag/uk turf/](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/uk turf/).

July 15  
**THE MIDWEST REGIONAL TURF FOUNDATION'S  
 MIDWEST REGIONAL TURF FIELD DAY**  
 Purdue University  
 West Lafayette, Ind.  
 Call 765-494-8039, or visit [www.mrtf.org](http://www.mrtf.org).

August 20  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA TURFGRASS  
 RESEARCH FIELD DAY**  
 Griffin, Ga.  
 Visit [www.georgiaturf.com](http://www.georgiaturf.com).

Aug. 13  
**OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY TURFGRASS  
 & LANDSCAPE RESEARCH FIELD DAY**  
 OTF Research & Education Center  
 Columbus, Ohio  
 Call 888-683-3445, or visit  
[www.ohioturfgrass.org](http://www.ohioturfgrass.org).

Aug. 5  
**CLEMSON FIELD DAY – SOUTH  
 CAROLINA TURFGRASS FOUNDATION**  
 Clemson, S.C.  
 Visit [www.scstma.org](http://www.scstma.org).

Aug. 6 - 9  
**GOLF COURSE BUILDERS ASSOCIATION  
 OF AMERICA'S SUMMER MEETING**  
 Ritz-Carlton  
 Deerborn, Mich.  
 Call 402-476-4444, or visit [www.gcbaa.org](http://www.gcbaa.org).

Sept. 12  
**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS TURFGRASS FIELD DAY**  
 Urbana, Ill.  
 Call 630-243-9483, or visit  
[www.illinoisturfgrassfoundation.org](http://www.illinoisturfgrassfoundation.org).

Sept. 16 - 19  
**FLORIDA TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION  
 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
 PGA National Resort  
 Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.  
 Call 800-882-6721, or visit [www.ftga.org](http://www.ftga.org).

Oct. 20 - 22  
**KENTUCKY TURFGRASS CONFERENCE**  
 Sloan Convention Center  
 Bowling Green, Ky.  
 Visit [www.uky.edu/Ag/uk turf/](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/uk turf/).

Oct. 27 - 29  
**WEST TEXAS GCSA'S 22ND ANNUAL  
 CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW**  
 Convention Center  
 Lubbock, Texas  
 Call 800-687-8447, or visit [www.wtgcsa.org](http://www.wtgcsa.org).

Nov. 6  
**GEORGIA SOD PRODUCERS  
 ASSOCIATION FIELD DAY**  
 Tifton, Ga.  
 Visit [www.georgiaturf.com](http://www.georgiaturf.com).

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## MAKE SURE YOU'RE PREPARED

If you ask yourself whether you're ready to be a golf course superintendent, you're probably not. Being ready to be a head superintendent isn't something that magically happens one morning after a couple of years as an assistant. It takes time, effort and dedication.

The job market has changed during the past 20 years. Back then, if you were an assistant, you were likely one for less than a year before moving up. Now, the job market is full of well-qualified superintendents and assistants looking to move. Assistants have to be prepared to interview along with experienced superintendents to secure the job. You must do your best to prepare yourself to make the successful move and be a step above others applying for the same position.

Among the best ways to prepare to be a superintendent are being involved, networking, asking for more responsibility, being assertive and always being prepared.

Become involved with your local, state and national associations so you can network with peers and members. Being involved with your association is more than just showing up to play golf and knocking a few back. Volunteering, serving on the board if your association (if possible), and writing articles for newsletters and trade publications are a few ways of becoming more well known.

If your employer doesn't provide the funds for membership, pay for it yourself. The pros far outweigh the cons. You need to be able to say you're an active member because this allows you to track your education and involvement. If you break it down over a year, the cost is less than a soda a day.

Becoming involved in the associations helps to keep you more in the know. The more you can make yourself visible, the

better your reputation and perception will be. This allows you to be prepared to take the next step.

Vendors, USGA agronomists, salespeople, golf professionals, general managers, etc., are all people you need to know. You should also get to know members and/or active golfers. The problem is you might know a wealth of people and be able to call them by name, but if they don't remember you when discussion of a potential job arises, your networking isn't effective. Nowadays, it's not who you know, but who knows you. The best thing is to stay visible. Make sure you use every chance you have to make contact, say hello and participate in a conversation. When you're prepared to make a move, make sure those in your network know. Getting the word out that you're in the market for a position only helps you stay on the tips of the tongues of people who might help secure an interview for you.

We all know how to grow grass and run a crew, but you need to be proficient communicating with members or golfers, general managers, golf pros, etc. You also need to deal with the human resource aspect. Ask to help plan the operational budget and capital budget. Ask to help with invoicing and ordering. Work with the mechanic to improve your aptitude with equipment repairs. To be a successful superintendent, you have to be able to do the jobs of everyone who works under you.

Try to get involved with more than the daily jobs and supervising the crew. If you believe running a crew and working on projects is all you need to be a superintendent, rethink your plan. Be as involved as your boss and improve your time management to be able to complete all your regular tasks, plus the new ones, successfully.

Superintendents should be more than willing to let their assistants try their hand at these tasks. It makes sense if they feel you have what it takes to succeed in the industry.

Sometimes, you have to keep asking and asserting yourself to be able to take on some of these tasks. Explain to your boss your intention is to improve yourself. If your boss is against the idea completely, ask for copies of a budget or meeting minutes and read over them all in detail at the least. If your boss is against helping you learn and grow, find another job. Working for someone that doesn't believe you need to have a well-rounded experience and isn't willing to help you learn does nothing to help prepare you for the next move.

Always be prepared for the big interview. When you feel you're prepared and ready to take that next step, prepare more. Interview for some jobs, even if you have no intention of taking the position. You don't want to go into the interview for the job you really want and fumble around because you aren't ready. You can read all the articles you want about interview preparation, but nothing prepares you for sitting a table with an interview team questioning you. You need to perfect your strategy and become accustomed to the pressure. Take a folder with examples of procedures and projects you've initiated to show your ability. You must be able to sell yourself and your abilities to secure the job you want. These steps can give you the upper hand when that job comes around.

Take the time to start developing strong skills to make you the most desirable candidate. Make a plan for the next five years of what you want to achieve and what steps are needed to achieve those goals.

Becoming a superintendent takes more than checking greens and trenching drainage. You need to prepare yourself, not just your work techniques, to become a successful superintendent. **GCI**