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A global positioning system helps manage carts and golfer traffic at the Blue Ridge Trail Golf Club in Pennsylvania.

ONLINE POLL

Is Mark Woodward, CGCS, the right choice for c.e.o. of the GCSAA? Visit the GCI home page to cast your vote.

AIR IT OUT

Voice your opinion about a topic or bring attention to something you believe deserves it. Visit our message board at www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard and speak your piece.

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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.

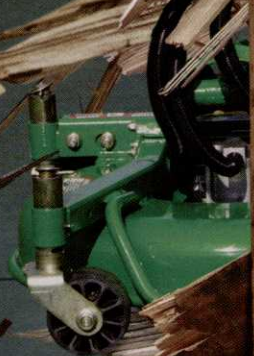


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John Walsh
Editor

WHERE THE POWER SHOULD BE

There's a plethora of information disseminated and endless gossip bandied about during the Golf Industry Show and its related conferences. As an editor, attending and covering such an event can be overwhelming. During the show, you absorb and process a ton of stuff. Your noggin works overtime. Some things you've heard before, some material is technical and difficult to understand, a few announcements are newsworthy, and some gossip is juicy. Afterwards, you're physically and mentally exhausted.

Reflecting on the show each year – amid all the conversations, interviews, speeches and presentations – there's usually one comment from somebody that sticks out in your mind and strikes you as more thought-provoking than anything you heard during the show. This year, that comment came from a shark – Greg Norman.

Speaking to a group of editors and reporters before the general session, Norman spent a considerable amount of time discussing golf and the environment and the bad rap the general public gives golf when it comes to environmental stewardship. As a trustee of the Environmental Institute for Golf, he emphasized the course maintenance data being collected at golf facilities throughout the country that eventually will be put into a "bible" that can be presented to legislators to help debunk the myth that golf course maintenance is harmful to the environment.

But listening to Norman's comments about intertwining the environment with course conditioning, this stuck out like a patch of zoysia in the middle of a bentgrass green: "We need to start backwards," he said. "Superintendents should be going to the members to tell them how the course should be, not the members going to the superintendent to determine conditions. We need to put the power where the power should be. Superintendents should be allowed to control how golf courses should be set up."

Wow! Imagine if that were true. What a difference it would make with your jobs. Think of how many superintendents would be working with different attitudes. If this were true, we'd see more brown grass during certain times of the year. Ask Norman or some of his European counterparts – there's nothing wrong with the brown look. Here in the States, Norman cited ChampionsGate Golf Club in Florida as an example of a course that's not wall-to-wall green all the time and values healthy turf and great playing conditions more than aesthetics.

We all know that because members pay dues – and, in many cases, own the club – what they want, they get. It's a simple concept to understand. But how about the concept of members paying for the expertise of a superintendent who dictates course conditions because he has the in-depth knowledge to make those types of decisions. If that were the case, superintendents would garner a deeper respect from members because they would trust you more than they do now.

If you work at a private club where you think you have more control over course conditions than what's considered the norm, let me know. I'd love to hear about it. It's definitely worth a story (or 12).

Superintendents should act on Norman's proposition. Think about how you can gently tip the balance of power for controlling course conditions in your favor more. For some, it's out of the question, especially in the hotly contested arena of club politics. But for others, it might be possible, so why not try? It would be good for the environment, your budget and your sanity. In a larger scope, it would be good environmental public relations for the industry. The trick, though, is explaining convincingly to members why it's good for them, too. Just tell them Greg Norman says that's the way it should be. What golfer can argue with a legendary pro golfer who's an ambassador for the game worldwide? **GCI**

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.



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EDITORIAL

GIE Media, Inc.
4020 Kinross Lakes Pkwy, 2nd floor
Richfield, OH 44286
Phone: 800-456-0707
Fax: 330-659-0824

Cindy Code

Editorial director
330-523-5331
ccode@gie.net

John Walsh

Editor
330-523-5361
jwalsh@gie.net

Margaret Hepp

Associate editor
330-523-5384
mhepp@gie.net

Heather Wood

Web editor
330-523-5348
hwood@gie.net

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG
terrybuchen@earthlink.net

Pat Jones

psjhawk@cox.net

David Wolff

dgwolff@charter.net

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG
Golf Agronomy International

Raymond Davies, CGCS
CourseCo

Tim Hiers, CGCS
The Old Collier Golf Club

Laurence Hirsh
Golf Property Analysts

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Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D.
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Pat Jones
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River Crest Country Club

Jim McLoughlin
TMG Golf

Matt Rostal
Interlachen Country Club

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How will you vote?

As I opened the March issue of *Golf Course Industry*, I thought, "Wow, look at this impressive list of relevant articles!" Then I read John Walsh's editorial ("The lesser of two evils," page 6) and felt deflated. All I can say to him and my fellow superintendents is when voting for the president of the United States, use the same logic, common sense and analytical skills you use when doing your job. Don't vote based on party loyalty or a general, historical core value system.

Look at your own golf course's economic health, the performance of your 401(k) or IRA, the value of your home, the prices of consumer goods, taxes other than income tax rates, your safety and security, and then tell me things are better than when we had a Democrat in the White House. If you want to generalize, answer this question: Who will more likely do a better job of running government – someone who hates and mistrusts it, or someone who believes in its necessity for serving and protecting all Americans?

Our checks-and-balances system can create workable compromises if both parties have adequate representation, unlike during the many years of unchallenged Republican rule. Capitalism and democracy aren't one and the same.

As a registered Independent, I've voted for a Republican president, and I'm not pushing a Democratic agenda. I'm only asking my colleagues to think long and hard about the coming election and vote for the candidate you believe will best serve your own interests, your golf course's interests and the interests of the USA. They should be one and the same.

Mark Jarrell, CGCS

Palm Beach National Golf and Country Club
Lake Worth, Fla.

Visit Augusta

Jim McLoughlin wrote a nice column ("Golf's absolute standard," page 14, March). I had the opportunity to visit Augusta National for a week during the 2005 Masters. It's a nice place. But what you see on TV isn't comparable to what you see in person. I have two superintendent friends who are going this year for a one-day visit. I told them one day isn't enough. I highly recommend

visiting Augusta National to all other fellow superintendents.

Willie Lopez
Golf course superintendent
SilverRock Resort
La Quinta, Calif.

Ethics standards

Your March article "Follow the Golden Rule" (page 30) compels me to suggest what's considered unethical behavior by an "independent" superintendent is considered good ole marketing and sales by some management companies. I'll bet every working superintendent has heard of or knows someone who has lost his job to a management company. Were any of these now unemployed individuals notified in advance of the management company's intent to visit their golf course and pitch their replacement to their employer by the aforementioned (often GCSAA member) management company as required by the GCSAA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Guidelines?

When I hear an affirmative response to that question, it will be the first.

The GCSAA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Guidelines make clear what's proper and ethical behavior, and members are encouraged to practice peer reinforcement of the standards. I'm a big fan of the standards, but I harbor no illusions. There's no effort to enforce these standards on the national or chapter level. I've heard this policy (or lack thereof) results from fear of being sued for restraint of trade or some such legal blather. Whether that's true or not, until it changes, let's call the standards what they are – voluntary.

Mind your fences and watch your back because there's no cavalry coming over the hill for the independent superintendent. You're on your own.

Fred Behnke, CGCS

Mount Prospect (Ill.) Municipal Golf Course

Correction

Jim McLoughlin's column, "Golf's absolute standard" (page 14, March), stated specific classes of CMAA, GCSAA and PGA members enjoy free access to the Masters. CMAA members no longer have this privilege. **GC**

GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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SALES

GIE Media, Inc.
4020 Kinross Lakes Parkway, 2nd Floor
Richfield, OH 44286
Phone: 800-456-0707
Fax: 330-659-0823

Kevin Gilbride
Publisher

Phone: 330-523-5368

Amee Robbins

Account manager, West Coast
Phone: 310-546-6060

Dave Szy

Account manager, Northeast
Phone: 330-523-5338

Russell Warner

Account manager, Southeast
Phone: 330-523-5385

Bonnie Velikonya

Classified sales
Phone: 330-523-5322

Debbie Kean

Manager, books
Phone: 330-523-5341

Maria Miller

Conferences manager
Phone: 330-523-5373

GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

Mark Rook, Creative director

Andrea Vagas, Managing art director

Helen Duerr, Production director

Samantha Gilbride, Production coordinator

CORPORATE STAFF

Richard Foster, Chairman and c.e.o.

Chris Foster, President and c.o.o.

Dan Moreland, Executive vice president

Jami Childs, Director, business resources and IT

Kelly Roop, Manager, accounting department

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