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### THE REEDUCATION OF A LOW PLUGGER

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### AIR IT OUT

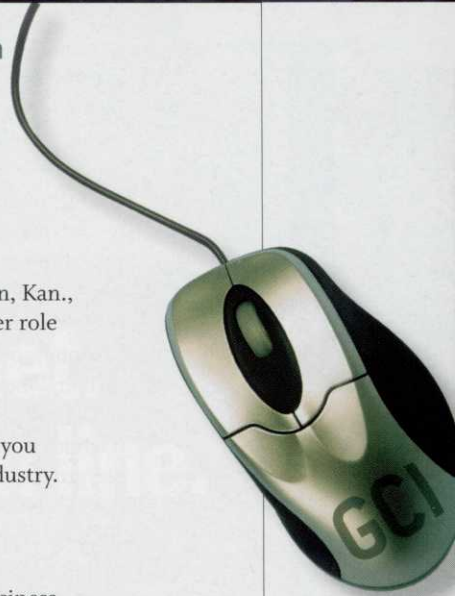
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### EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT:

*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.



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INDUSTRY



**John Walsh**  
Editor

## LOSE THE EGO

While talking to several American golf course superintendents working abroad for a sidebar accompanying the cover story in this issue, one comment stuck out like a weed on a fairway at Augusta:

"I like the thought of being listened to more than what you get in the States. In the States, golf is run by opinionated businessmen who don't listen well and are difficult to work with. Overseas, people are looking for information. It's refreshing. People appreciate what you're doing."

Those are the thoughts of David Brinkel, vice president of Dubai Golf City in the United Arab Emirates. Brinkel likes it overseas so much he's been over there for about 20 years. Though it's just one person's view – although I know Brinkel isn't alone with his sentiment about those running private clubs in the U.S. – it says a lot about golf course operations here in the States. Brinkel's thoughts should spur green committee members and club presidents to think about their relationship with their superintendents. Is this how your superintendent views you?

This isn't the first time I've heard such sentiments from superintendents about those who run private clubs. In fact, I hear it regularly. Take hiring, for example. Those making the decisions to hire superintendents at private clubs know less than the interviewee about agronomy and course maintenance in general. But they're the ones asking the questions because they own the clubs. Rightly so. In the mind of some committees, it seems a superintendent's personality, previous employment (read prestigious clubs) and connections trump agronomic knowledge, a keen business sense, and managerial and organizational skills. Is that the best way to hire?

Then there are the stories about superintendents losing their jobs – not because they can't grow grass but because they didn't see eye to eye with a green committee chair or club president or didn't continually meet members' unrealistic expectations. Some superintendents are tired of dealing with know-it-all wealthy businessmen on a power trip when it comes to maintaining their playground. Go figure, politics screws up a good thing at many clubs.

Money, power, politics, ego ... sounds like the ingredients for a racy Hollywood thriller, when in reality, superintendents deal with those aspects of club life regularly.

The decision makers at private clubs aren't necessarily the most educated people when it comes to golf course operations. Just because they have a lot of money and a big, green playground doesn't mean they have to deal with superintendents in such negative ways that drive them to other clubs, sales positions in the industry or even countries.

Of course, not all club members are such a pain. There are those who learn as much as they can about course maintenance, don't complain much about course conditions, understand superintendents' jobs, treat them with respect and actually listen to them. But you don't hear about that type often.

I'm sure there are many more David Brinkel's out there who are dealing with the egotistical volunteer leaders who just don't get it when it comes to club operations. It's too bad. Members should keep in mind the companies at which they're executives operate differently than their golf clubs.

Despite individual wealth and equity in their club, these difficult-to-work-with members should lose the ego, get off the power trip and take it easy on superintendents. Doing so is only going to improve course conditions at their club, although it will happen without as much input as members would like to give. But members shouldn't worry, superintendents can handle it. **GC**

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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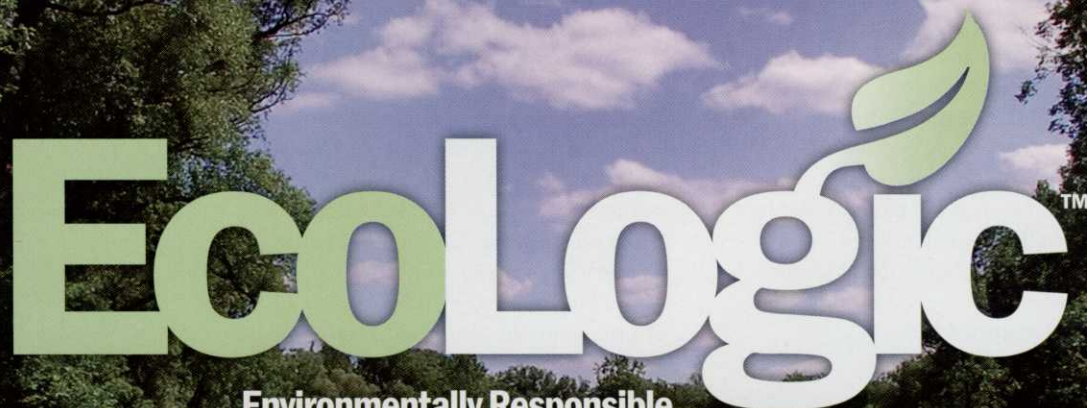
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## The right focus

John Walsh's editorial, "Focus on opportunities" (August issue, page 6), hits the nail on the head. I deal with two golf courses that suffer horribly from the lack of conditions he outlines as the two key characteristics for success – great course conditions and attentive customer service.

The course where I'm employed has fantastic conditioning – from all the feedback I've received – but poor service. A resort where I consult has poor conditioning and terrible service. I'm trying to solve the problems at both places, but these situations are more complicated than can be addressed in this space. I'm in a pivotal position at both places to implement change and am working to do so.

**Kendall Marquardt, CGCS**  
**Kenne Enterprises**  
**Mazomanie, Wis.**

## Slow play

For years I've been saying that we're walking into rounds of golfers who learned the tempo of play by watching pro golf Sunday afternoon on television ("Dying a slow death," August, page 74). I'm a marshal at Stanford University Golf Course, and I see this all the time.

Several years ago, when Tiger Woods was still at Stanford, I was asked to drive his father, Earl, around following Tiger's group. Earl quietly mumbled about the slowness of play. Oh, did he ever. Finally, on a par-5 16th hole, the players were looking for yardage markers, eyeballing their second shot, checking the markers again, eyeballing some more, when Earl shouted at them: "Just hit the goddamn thing!"

**Ted Bache**  
**Marshal**  
**Stanford University Golf Course**  
**Stanford, Calif.**

Pat Jones' writing about slow play ("Dying a slow death," August, page 74) is on the money when he says five-hour-plus rounds are taking away from golf courses.

Our course is consistently trying to improve pace of play by training player assistants to help golfers move faster rather

than say, "You're falling behind, and we need you to pick up the pace." We've tried giving away free beer to those who finish in a recommended time, but to be honest, all that did was give our early morning players, who finish in less than four hours anyway, a free beer. It also made customers playing later in the day even more upset about their slow pace because they'd been held up by slow players and didn't finish within the recommended time.

We're finding a slow player is a slow player. It's easy to slow someone down but difficult to speed him up. It's frustrating for our staff to know that when Mr. Smith tees it up every Saturday at 7:15 a.m. he's going to hold up the course with his slow play unless we help him move faster throughout his entire round. We also have families who seem to never have played before or maybe not since Arnie's prime.

Presently, we run seven and eight minute times with starter times booked every other hour to help space groups out. We're considering spreading out our tee times. One reason for us leaving intervals this way is that if we have 100 rounds or 200 rounds it could take the same five hours to play because of one or two slow groups.

The bottom line is that we don't want to die the slow death. If we can get our pace of play at its slowest period to be around 4.5 hours, then we'll be capable of fixing any course's pace-of-play nightmare.

**Donn Hess**  
**Head golf professional**  
**The Pines Golf Club**  
**Tucson, Ariz.**

I loved Pat Jones' article, "Dying a slow death," in the August issue (page 74). I've always wondered when this silly game people play will die out soon and why they pay us so much to provide an area for adults to play. Additionally, I wonder when I'm going to call my green chairman to tell him we can't cut greens anymore because there's no more fuel.

**Jeffrey Urquhart**  
**Golf course superintendent**  
**Milton-Hoosic Club**  
**Canton, Mass.**

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