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DAVE WHEELER

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The size of the golf economy is estimated to be **\$75.9 billion** – that's more than newspaper publishing (\$50.1 billion), performing arts and spectator sports (\$64.7 billion) and the motion picture and video industries (\$73.9 billion).

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### SHARE YOUR LESSONS

We're running a series of "Lessons Learned" articles from superintendents past and present who have life lessons or golf course maintenance-related stories to share. Read them online or e-mail yours to [mpalmieri@gie.net](mailto:mpalmieri@gie.net).

### LIST AN EVENT

Does your chapter association have an event to publicize? Get it listed at [golfcourseindustry.com](http://golfcourseindustry.com) for maximum exposure. E-mail details to [mpalmieri@gie.net](mailto:mpalmieri@gie.net).

### CHECK THE LABEL

GCI's Web site features a number of useful tools and information – including a database of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). To search for a label, visit [golfcourseindustry.com/msds](http://golfcourseindustry.com/msds).

### WEEKLY READER

The GCI weekly e-newsletter is the place to catch breaking news, industry updates and product information. To subscribe, visit [golfcourseindustry.com/newsletter](http://golfcourseindustry.com/newsletter).



### 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 professionals responsible for maintaining a golf course as an important asset.



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## REFUTING "GOLF = BAD"

I recently heard a story on NPR recounting the activities of Bear Stearns' former CEO Jimmy Cayne, who's responsible, in part, for the investment bank's downfall. The author of a new book, "House of Cards: A Tale of Hubris and Wretched Excess on Wall Street," gave listeners a glimpse at the indulgences of an archetypical Wall Street exec like Cayne. In addition to his \$28 million apartment and three-week-long jaunts to play in bridge tournaments, Cayne was a golfer. Every Thursday afternoon, he left the office by helicopter to play a round.

"Damn," I thought, because that's not the first time in the last few months I've heard golf used as an example of corporate excess. Chalk it up as another mark in the public's tally of "golf = bad" examples. Other recent additions to the list:

- Sen. Tom Coburn introduced an amendment to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka the \$790 billion stimulus bill) expressly excluding funding for golf courses.

- House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank scolded Northern Trust Corp. (which received \$1.6 billion in federal Troubled Asset Relief Program funding) for sponsoring the

Northern Trust Open at the Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif.

- Sen. John Kerry introduced a bill preventing any TARP-fund recipient from hosting or sponsoring conferences, parties and entertainment events. The bill would allow waivers for events "directly related to the operation of the business or at the discretion of the Treasury Secretary" (who presumably has nothing better to do besides yay or nay corporate outings).

That last bullet is the most troubling to me. And it's not because I don't think companies benefitting from taxpayer dollars shouldn't be held to a set of standards. What bothers me is Kerry completely missed the point when he justified the bill in a press release, saying, "Americans who play by the rules are losing their jobs and struggling to pay their mortgages... some companies clearly need a reality check to get their priorities straight..."

Kerry and the other politicians grandstanding against golf are the ones who need the reality check. They owe it to Americans

to consider the deeper implications of their surface-level attacks on a given industry. When corporate sponsors pull back out of fear they'll be fingered for being fulsome, it's not the sponsors that take a hit. It's the industries who support these events that feel the effects – like ours, which generates a total economic impact of \$195 billion annually and supports 2 million jobs with wage income of \$61 billion.

Though it's easy to portray golf as elitist, the golf course industry is about as far from elitist as you can get. Just look at the faces of the wait staff at Any Club, the maintenance crew at Your Course Muni or the many vendors who make their livings servicing golf facilities.

It's not just jobs. The amount of annual charitable giving attributed to golf is estimated at \$3.5 billion. When politicians shun

golf, the stigma trickles down to local golf fund-raising efforts. Again, it's not corporate sponsors who are penalized. It's the neighborhood charity that won't meet its goal this year because it fears appearing elitist if it hosts a golf event.

Over the last decade, golf's leaders have begun to gather the data the industry needs to tell its story through the Golf 20/20 economic impact

reports. Sharing this information needs to happen at all levels of the golf course industry – not just among association leaders. They're doing a good job; they'll go to the Hill for the second annual National Golf Day on May 13. It's important the entire industry forces politicians and the public to see the real faces of the golf course industry – the cooks, servers, maintenance crew members and others – before they become part of the group Kerry referred to – the ones who lose their jobs and struggle to pay their mortgages. If golf continues to get a bad rap, facilities will continue to lose revenue, which quickly translates to layoffs. By the time your employees and coworkers join the unemployment line, it'll be too late to send the message that the golf course industry is about more than Thursday afternoon helicopter rides and greedy execs like Jimmy Cayne. **GCI**



**Marisa Palmieri** Senior editor

*Marisa Palmieri*

## GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

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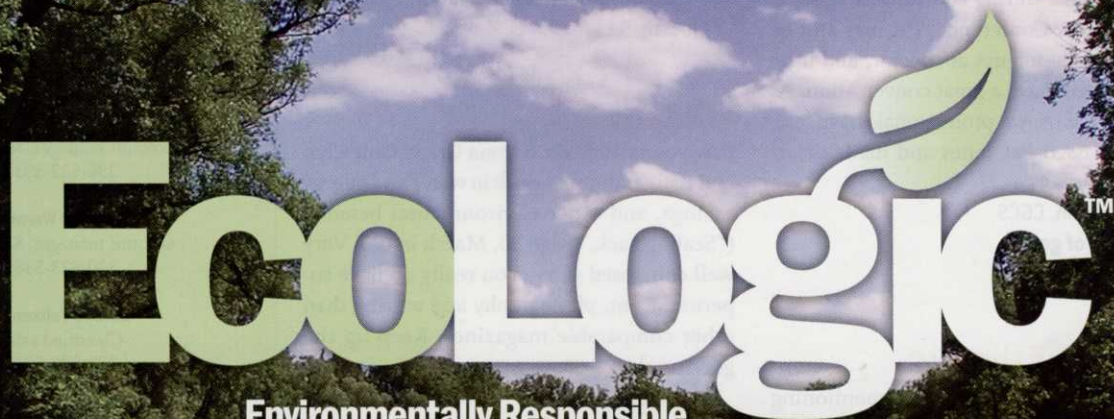
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## FEEDBACK

We'd like to hear from you.

E-mail us at [gci@gie.net](mailto:gci@gie.net) with your thoughts and opinions.

## Crass column?

In my opinion, Pat Jones' column in your February 2009 issue ("Here's your sign," page 74) did a disservice to your publication. I felt his crass attempt at humor was more appropriate to a barroom discussion with the eight or nine guys who can always be found at the hotel bar during educational sessions at the GCSAA Conference. Pat may still be able to find these guys at the bar, and if he does, they will have a great conversation. As for the rest of us, we professionals have long since surpassed Pat Jones and his lame attempts at humor.

**Dennis Lyon, CGCS**  
Manager of golf  
City of Aurora, Colo.

## A round of thanks

Thanks to Marisa Palmieri for mentioning Rounds4Research.com in an article in the February issue of GCI ("Taking research for granted?" page 6). The positive message

regarding our program was well received and actually helped increase Web traffic. Many thanks.

**Tim Kreger**  
Director of programs  
Carolinas Golf Course  
Superintendents Association  
Liberty, S.C.

## Well done

Saw your article on Barona Creek Golf Club and their admirable work in water and energy savings, and other environmental benefits ("Scaling back," page 30, March issue). Very well composed story. You really do have superior layout, photography and writing than other comparable magazines. Keep up the good work!

**Todd Eckenrode**  
Principal  
Origins Golf Design  
Irvine, Calif.

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April 22  
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For a complete calendar listing, visit [golfcourseindustry.com/events/](http://golfcourseindustry.com/events/)

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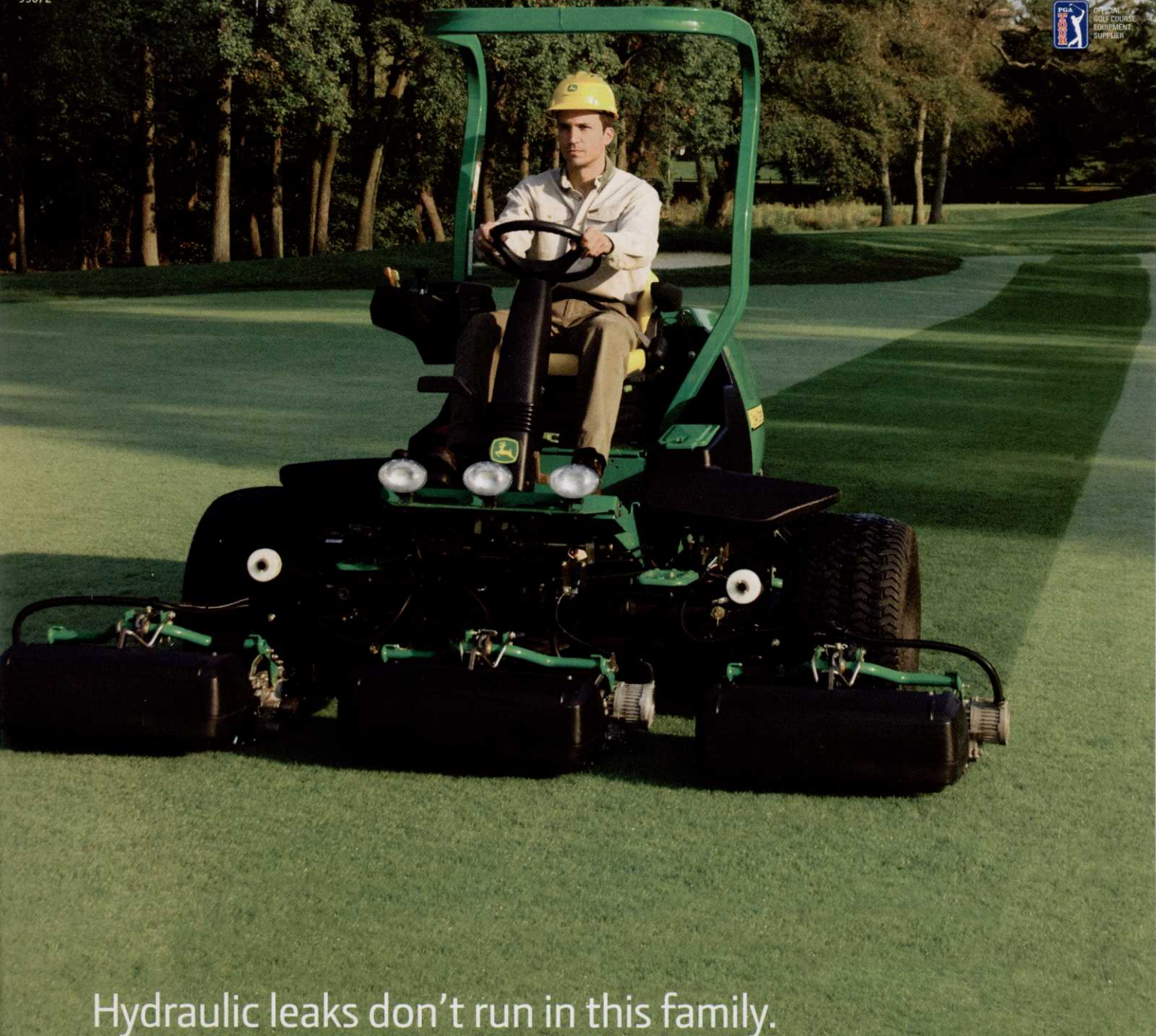
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**Jeff Wichman** is an assistant superintendent at Patty Jewett Golf Course in Colorado Springs, Colo. He can be reached at [jwichman@springsgov.com](mailto:jwichman@springsgov.com) or 719-385-6942.

## LEAVE YOUR OPTIONS OPEN

I've had the privilege of working on each of the "big three" types of courses: a resort, a country club and a municipality. The experiences and knowledge I gained have proven to be invaluable. I often hear recent turf school graduates say they only would consider working on a resort course, country club or tournament course. This narrow-mindedness closes doors before they even open. Each type of course offers a wealth of benefits. By considering all options, they could find themselves in a beloved position.

I started my golf career at The Broadmoor Hotel and Golf Club in Colorado Springs, Colo., in 1995. It was host to the 1995 U.S. Women's Open, under the direction of Tommy Anderson, CGCS.

I was a fish out of water running the East Course and Broadmoor grounds irrigation. There was more than enough work to go around and I never had a dull day. Because it's the lifeblood of a course, irrigation is a great place to start a golf course maintenance career. I spent only a year at the resort, but what I learned in that short amount of time made my other golf positions a piece of cake. I still reminisce about my days at the Broadmoor whenever I'm installing, troubleshooting and digging up those nasty leaks that cover you in mud from head to toe.

The Woodmoor Pines Country Club in Monument, Colo., was the next rung on my career ladder. There I worked directly with Scott Kresenbach, CGCS, and again irrigation was my main focus.

Woodmoor's irrigation was unique. The front nine was a block system and the back nine was a normal open hydraulic system. The normal open hydraulic system kept us all very busy. The other great challenge was dealing with the board of directors and the newly appointed greens committee chairman. It seemed every new greens committee chair had his or her own agenda. Some ideas would benefit the course, but many served special interests. Dealing with the different personalities within a country club is demanding. I'm sure there's not a country club superintendent alive that's pleased with the entire membership.

For the past seven years, I've happily been at Patty Jewett Golf Course, which is owned by the city of Colorado Springs. It's a 27-hole facility established in 1898, located in the heart of the city. When I accepted

the job I realized the course probably never would host a major event. However, it was the city's entire package that helped me recognize that it was the right decision for my family and me.

This position has been rewarding because working on a high-quality, city-owned course has many pluses. There are, of course, many challenges at a public course. Joe Public is at the top the list. There are all types of patrons that come through the door.

The gates open at 6 a.m. in the summer, and they're teeing each nine at 6:07 a.m. By 10 a.m., all three nines are packed. Like so many golf courses, the mornings are extremely busy for the maintenance staff. If one employee calls in sick, or if a unit has mechanical trouble, we play catch-up all day. The public waits for no one. Additionally, the irrigation system is the top priority. No matter how hard you try – that's one thing you can't escape.

Because it's the lifeblood of a course, irrigation is a great place to start a golf course maintenance career.

I've failed to mention that the pump station is the best way to learn a lot in a short time.

When the pump station technician shows up, watch him and ask a lot of questions. He'll usually share valuable information with you. Most of the time, he'll provide basic troubleshooting techniques that you can perform before he makes a trip to your course. In my area, the pump station technicians are spread pretty thin, and the pump usually likes to fail in the heat of the summer when no rain is in the forecast. Having some pump station knowledge helps you out in these circumstances.

Based on my experiences, I'd recommend college students take internships at different types of courses and assistants be open-minded about different types of facilities. Your opinions of the different types of facilities may change, but even if they don't, at least you've experienced all sides of the golf course industry.

Keep your options open and you'll be surprised about what you'll learn. **GCI**