

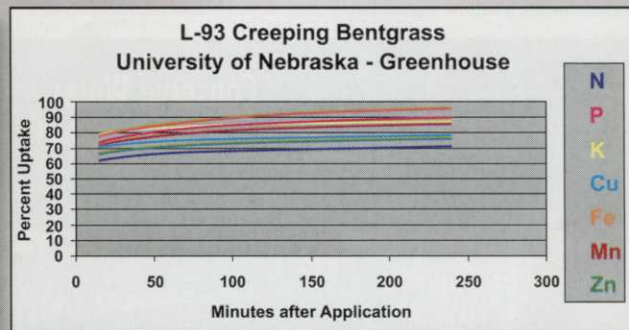
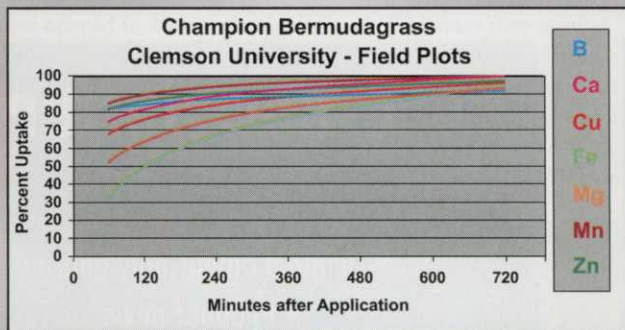


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PRODUCT FOCUS
HANDHELD EQUIPMENT

“For us, it is hardly ever about price,” he says. “You get what you pay for. If operators continually return to the maintenance facility with a piece of equipment that’s not functioning correctly, that wastes a lot of time. Then it must be fixed, and two people’s time is wasted. If you choose to buy a piece of equipment for a considerable savings, chances are you’ll spend that much money in the future paying for lost labor, quality of work or time and parts to repair.”

Flynn buys the majority of the handheld equipment from Jacobsen distributor Steven Willand.


“Our equipment technician, Malcolm, has a great relationship with their service department,” he says. “In the five years I’ve been at Great River, there hasn’t been one issue they’ve not been able to help us with. Having a strong sales rep and dealer support is just one more tool in the shed.

“We are only as strong as the weakest link,” he adds. “Having all of the tools to get the job done efficiently and effectively makes things so much easier in the long run.” GCI

At Great River Golf Club in Milford, Conn., the rule of thumb regarding handheld equipment is if the repair is more than half of the replacement cost, the staff will purchase new equipment.



RedMax

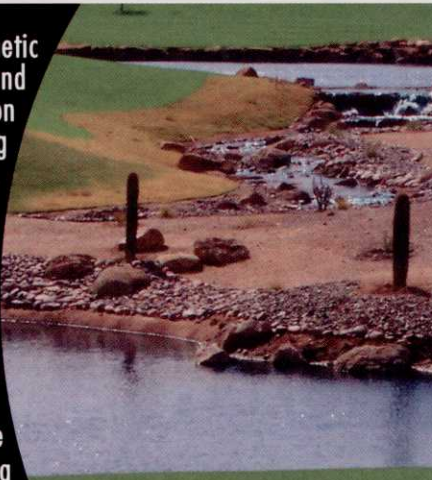
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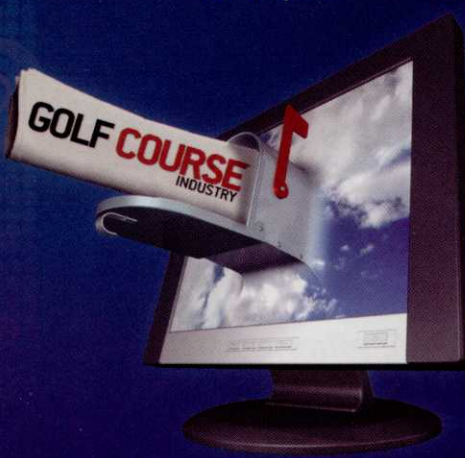
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BY MARISA PALMIERI

Handheld homework

Circling Raven Golf Club's equipment manager evaluates handheld equipment

With a background that includes four years working for an equipment dealership, Darak Bigler, equipment manager at Circling Raven Golf Club in Worley Idaho, supports golf course superintendent Brian Woster in conducting a lot of research before making any purchasing decisions on handheld products.

"At most courses, the superintendent has the final say, but most superintendents will leave it up to the equipment manager to do research and give them a couple of options," Bigler says.

Bigler, who has been at Circling Raven for seven years (he was on staff for the grow-in before the course opened in 2003), may be in the market soon for an entire fleet of handheld equipment.

Aside from phasing out several John Deere string trimmers that came with an initial equipment package, Bigler hasn't had to replace one piece of handheld equipment yet. And he's only had to rebuild two – one backpack blower and one string trimmer. Sooner or later, though, he knows the time will come when repair costs offset replacement costs, and he'll be in the market for a new fleet.

His ongoing research includes field testing equipment, shopping around equipment and parts prices, and interacting with manufacturers to learn about new technology.

Bigler and his full-time, year-round assistant do most of the handheld equipment testing themselves. They'll attend dealers' open houses or request demo products, which they put to use in actual conditions on Circling Raven's 18 holes.

"When it comes to handheld equipment, I definitely like to run it and examine everything," Bigler says. "There's a lot involved – horsepower, weight, operator comfort. There's a fine line between equipment that's a bit cheaper, but not durable enough."

When Bigler requests demo equipment, he'll have the maintenance crew test the pieces and ask them if they like it or not.

Circling Raven currently operates a mix of

product lines, including a Tanaka walk-behind edger and several backpack blowers; several RedMax backpack blowers, string trimmers and reciprocators; two Husqvarna chain saws; two Stihl pole pruners; and five Allen hover mowers.

"When they bring a piece of equipment in, we'll ask, 'Is there anything you don't like about it?'" Bigler says.

Because Bigler doesn't operate with a throw-away mentality – he rebuilds equipment whenever possible – parts prices weigh heavily on his decision.

"I'll always shop around – it doesn't matter if it's equipment or nuts and bolts," he says, noting he values dealer support but knows he often can get a better rate by buying direct from the manufacturer or through a niche distributor.

For example, Bigler prefers to buy bearings

from a bearing house rather than a dealership.

There's no set rule for how Bigler makes repair-or-replace decisions. He considers each piece on a case-by-case basis. For example, rebuilding the backpack blower and string trimmer cost about \$100 in parts and two man-hours each. That's not bad for equipment that costs \$300 to \$400 to replace, he says.

"When you tear down a piece of equipment, you have to figure out if it's going to be worth your time in labor and parts to rebuild it," he says. "If it's \$200 in parts and four to five hours of labor, is that justifiable? It depends on the workload in the shop."

During the past year, a new "tag-in/tag-out" policy has lessened the amount Bigler spends to repair equipment by an estimated \$2,000.

The course has a sectional maintenance program, where each crew member is designated



Darak Bigler

Assigning numbers to all pieces of equipment and requiring crew members to sign them out has reduced replacement costs due to damage by about \$2,000.

PRODUCT FOCUS HANDHELD EQUIPMENT

two holes to take care of from tee to green with the exception of some basic tasks that take place first thing in the morning, like greens and fairway mowing, bunker raking and cup cutting. Because of this arrangement, most of the handheld equipment is assigned to the crew members, but some pieces are shared.

If equipment damage is a result of negligence, employees pay half the cost of parts. Before creating a sign-out program for equipment, employees who didn't want to be responsible for damage would try to sneak items back into the shop without reporting them. They can't do that now. Every piece of shared equipment has a number that corresponds to a tag, which hangs on a board in the shop. When an employee signs out a piece of equipment, that item's number is moved to his name on the board.

"When they bring it back in, we physically look at the equipment and make sure no damage has been done, so we know it's ready to go for

the next day," Bigler says, noting that no damage has been attributed to negligence – which he defines as being careless and creating an unsafe environment – since instituting the program.

"The 'tag-in/tag-out' system has helped out quite a bit," he says.

But there's a downside: It's created more work for the managers, including Bigler, his assistant, the superintendent and his two assistants.

"One person has to be free to check everything in and out," he says. "You have to put effort into it to make it work."

The final component of Bigler's handheld homework entails talking with manufacturers to find out what new products and features they'll be releasing. He visits their trade show booths at the Golf Industry Show each year.

"I'm fortunate enough to go to the national show every year," he says. "I always talk to the manufacturers, see what's new and what they're doing to better their products." **GCI**



Darak Bigler

A sign-out process for equipment prevents Circling Raven's crew members from trying to sneak damaged equipment back into the shop.

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Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 38-year, life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.



EQUIPMENT IDEAS

Follow you, follow me

At the Sharon Golf Club in Sharon Center, Ohio, the maintenance crew tows grass trailers behind five-plex fairway mowers, even while they're operating because of the circular mowing pattern. The operators stop mowing when the grass catchers are full and dump the contents into the grass trailer, then they resume mowing. The crew uses three fairway mowers at the same time, mowing nine holes (12 acres), which takes about three hours a day.

Each trailer is equipped with a broom to disperse the grass clippings that drop from the mower rollers, a roller scraper, divot mix containers and engineer flags to mark damaged sprinkler heads.

The grass trailers feature a 42-inch-by-48-inch trailer chassis, 16-inch-by-6.5-inch-by-8-inch turf tires, a leaf spring suspension, a 3/4-inch-thick marine plywood floor (the crew painted the plywood with a latex enamel paint), 24-inch-high sides and a rear vertical sliding gate. The 1/8-inch steel rear gate has a 1-inch channel along the edges to strengthen it. The crew made the trailer ball hitch, which is welded to the rear of each fairway mower, with 2-inch-square tubing bent in two places and a 1 7/8-inch ball bolted to it.

Frank Dobie, general manager and golf course superintendent, and David Willmott, senior assistant superintendent, and Gary Bogdanski, equipment manager, devised the grass trailer concept.

The materials cost less than \$300, and it took about 20 hours to build each one.



Travels With Terry

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in hand. He shares helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.

Stay put

The golf course at the TPC Potomac (Md.) at Avenel Farm was reconstructed recently. Chad Adcock, golf course superintendent, worked with Dennis Ingram, a PGA Tour agronomist, and came up with a unique idea to keep metal stakes that hold bunker liners in place from moving upward, which is caused by freezing and thawing cycles. With the stakes glued to the bunker liner, they become one unit and can move together, instead of the metal stakes moving upward on their own.

First, the bunker liner is installed per the manufacturer's recommendations with all of the seams glued or bonded together. The metal stakes then are inserted into the liner on 12-inch centers. Liberally applying Liquid Nails, or any high-quality marine adhesive, to the surface and on the top of the stakes holds the liner and stakes together. Once the glue dries, bunker sand can be installed.

Liquid Nails costs about \$5.39 a tube, which is enough for two to three average size bunkers, totaling about 5,000 square feet.

Once the staff is trained properly, there's no appreciable extra labor needed to apply the glue. This process can work in any climate. **GCI**





Tim Moraghan is principal of Aspire Golf Consulting in Long Valley, N.J. He can be reached at tmoraghan11@comcast.net or 908-635-7978.

SET YOURSELF APART

The off-season is upon us, and despite the current economic climate, maybe you're getting a bailout from the daily routine of your job. Hopefully, you're blessed with having a job or have been fortunate to find new employment.

One of the services my firm provides is assisting employers searching for new staff and assisting superintendents seeking employment. The market is tight, cost cutting is rampant, and an abundance of new people are entering the golf business. Those seeking to advance to the next level of employment are faced with stiff competition.

So, how does a golf course superintendent, a mature golf course manager, a senior assistant superintendent or equipment technician get the attention of a prospective employer? After reviewing hundreds of resumes last fall, here are observations and suggestions about how to – and how not to – formulate a professional, attention-grabbing resume.

THE COVER LETTER

Because the cover letter is the primary introduction to the search committee, consider the following:

- Be professional, neat and clean. Be organized and brief when stating your interest and desire of a position.
- If your current employer knows you're looking for a new position, use club letterhead. It demonstrates you're proud of your club and you work on its behalf.
- Be accurate about your interest and desire for employment. Don't gush with enthusiasm and praise of what a privilege and golden opportunity it would be for you to accept employment.
- Don't describe how much tournament experience you have and how many major championships you've worked. Unless you've been the golf course superintendent during a tournament, the search committee won't be impressed that you've raked bunkers or filled divots.
- Don't ramble on about the rich, glori-

ous golf history and tradition of your club or how many major championships have been contested there, unless you were intimately involved with them. The club's reputation will speak for itself.

- Make sure you have the correct name, address and spelling of the club, particularly the contact person's name who's receiving the resume. Don't send your resume to Club A when applying to Club B and vice versa.

... a superintendent candidate provided a DVD including an interview featuring himself, a virtual tour of the golf course ...

THE RESUME

In this age of technology, there are numerous ways to provide information to a prospective employer. Use these methods to your advantage:

- The traditional paper resume is acceptable. If this format is what you choose, use whatever shipping method will get the document to the club quickly and undamaged. If your resume arrives crumpled or folded in a standard envelope with postage due, it demonstrates a lack of preparation and is a red flag for the committee.
- Be brief with your personal history, background, education and qualifications summary. Focus on your career highlights and accomplishments.
- Use various Internet sources to post your information, including the GCSAA Web site, your local GCSAA chapter Web site, or even create your own Web site.
- Create a visual record that includes pictures of the golf course that can be sent easily, handled and stored easily by the search committee, and instantly provided to everyone. In many instances, the more paper sent, the less it's read.

• Recently, a superintendent candidate provided a DVD including an interview featuring himself, a virtual tour of the golf course and maintenance facility, an overview of staff training and daily golf course preparations. It included on-course dealings with the green chairman and committee, who were reviewing an upcoming renovation project. This was imaginative and showed initiative, setting the superintendent apart from his competitors.

KEY POINTERS

- If the application time is fixed and resumes are expected by a certain date and time, don't expect consideration if your information is received late.
- Include every possible way you can be reached, including addresses (personal or professional) and phone numbers. Don't provide your employer's number if he isn't aware you're looking for another position.
- Always provide a correct and current e-mail address. If I send an e-mail response and it's returned stating "failed mail delivery," the opportunity is missed.
- Realize the search committee may check every piece of information in your resume thoroughly for accuracy and integrity. Don't state you were employed some place or worked a championship event if you didn't.
- Do your homework about the club to which you're applying. Knowing the history and design background of the club, as well as its championships, turf concerns, past superintendent profiles and philosophies, will set you apart from the competition.
- It's fine to follow-up with an e-mail or phone call to verify your resume was received. Allow seven to 10 days before following up. Don't be overbearing.
- If you don't get an interview or the desired response, send a hand-written, thank-you note on club or personal stationery to the search committee. This indicates a thoroughness and respect for the position, your current club or employer and yourself. This simple gesture may keep you top-of-mind with those conducting future searches. **GCI**

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(Impact on the business continued from page 78)

testing. Each test, which includes a complete report from EnviroLogic Resources, costs as much as \$5,000 and detects orthophosphates, nitrates and pesticides. Phipps determined what Thun's tests detect based on the chemical products he uses to maintain the turfgrass.

Overall, Phipps is following environmental stewardship guidelines published by the Oregon GCSA and his own integrated pest management program. When applying pesticides, Phipps considers using new products and whether he wants to introduce a new chemical class into his IPM program. If he did that, he would have to have the water tested for the new class of chemical, which would translate into additional costs.

"My IPM makes me think about what chemicals I use," he says. "It's a back-door way not to use additional pesticides because I might have to pay for the extra test."

In the past, the water tests detected a minute amount of the insecticide Sevin (carbaryl). Phipps applied three pounds of granular carbaryl to an approach (1.7oz. AI/1,000 sq. ft.) one time but stopped using it four years ago because of its tendency to move into the soil. He says sandy soil might have been one reason why the product moved so quickly through the soil and was detected in the adjacent pond. It also could have come from nearby treated residential lawns, which run onto the property. Regardless, there was no direct runoff from the golf course.

Since the testing started, Phipps has ceased using three pesticides: Sevin, Rubigan (but for reasons other than pollution) and Confront, which contains clopyralid, which also had a small detection in the tests. He tries to steer clear of insecticides, but Stone Creek has a crane fly nuisance, so he'll spot treat only the areas that have a history of infestation.

The county wants Phipps to reduce the amount spent on water testing because of the economy. Phipps and the county feel comfortable reducing the testing frequency to once a year because the tests have occurred twice a year for eight years and there haven't been any detections, which are measured in parts per million, in the past two years.

Generally, golf courses are better than many other industries when it comes to pesticide use, Phipps says. He cites Christmas tree growers who spray insecticides on trees with bare soil below them. There's nothing to filter the pesticide, unlike turf on golf courses.

"But nurserymen don't get fingers pointed at them like golf courses do," he says.

Phipps acknowledges many superintendents don't have the budget to implement these water tests. He estimates there are 24 golf courses in Oregon that test water like he does. There are even more testing just for nitrates and orthophosphates. Phipps says this approach is cheaper and probably costs in the hundreds of dollars, not thousands.

"It's a tough nut to crack," he says. GCI

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(Letters continued from page 8)

knows about. Peter Salinetti of Schenectady, N.Y., is a retired CGCS/CCM. However, the GCSAA only tracks members' other designations if they volunteer that information, so there may be more. If you or someone you know is both a CGCS/CCM, we'd like to know. Contact Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@gie.net.

Bunker liner cost

It's important to note the quoted cost of installing hard or soil-binder types of liners (\$2.50 to \$3.00) was inaccurately high in Jeff Bauer's column ("Bunker liner low-down," November issue, page 14). Speaking for Klingstone, the material cost about \$1.25 per

square foot. We don't doubt some builders have quoted a labor factor as high as an additional \$1.25 to \$1.75 per square foot, often because of unfamiliarity with the product and/or its application.

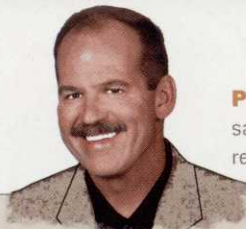
Our product is sprayed into the bunker cavity through a rubber hose and isn't more difficult or involved than "watering" the bunker cavity. There are no fabrics to cut, seams to match or staples to install.

While materials for fabric liners are less expensive to purchase, they're more labor intensive and time consuming to install and repair. The installed costs of the

different systems should be significantly closer than the article suggests.

Bob McCormick
General manager
Klingstone
Charlotte, N.C.





Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

PLAN C FOR THE GCSAA

One of the highlights of the Golf Industry Show is the celebrity factor. Last year, many attendees were wowed by the appearance of Greg Norman to accept the prestigious and much coveted Old Tom Morris Award. (Many were far more impressed by having the amazing Chris Evert accompany the Shark. My only disappointment was she didn't wear one of those short tennis outfits from her halcyon days in the '70s, but I digress.)

Yet, here in 2009, just when a bruised and battered golf business needs something special to get the industry jazzed about a show in a beaten and broken city, the celebrity "accepting" the major award is neither alive nor famous.

As you've likely heard by now, the most important honor in the profession will be presented this year to Col. John Morley – a guy most of you probably have never heard of – who's been moldering in his grave for 60 years.

It's not that the Little Colonel, as he was nicknamed, doesn't deserve some props. He was an overachieving Ohio greenkeeper and club manager who pulled together a bunch of his buddies from throughout the region to form the first primitive unified association for golf course grass growers. He poked and prodded peers from top private clubs to come to Sylvania (Ohio) Country Club in 1926 to sign off on a charter for a national organization. He was the first president of the association and one of its key leaders for two decades. The grateful members back then gave him two distinguished service awards for his contributions before he floated up to the great maintenance facility in the sky in 1946.

I know this because, for a few years while I was on the GCSAA staff, I was involved vaguely in handing out a specious piece of artwork called the Col. John Morley Award. This thing – an often mediocre painting depicting the outgoing GCSAA past president's favorite hole at "his" golf course – was presented to his employer

(usually a half-drunk green chairman) in gratitude for allowing said past president to put in about 12 billion hours away from the facility over the span of seven or eight years on the national board. The idea was that the deeply appreciative club would display it proudly in its lobby (or, more likely, stick it behind a pile of boxes in the assistant chef's office) in honor of their superintendent's national leadership role.

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The only problem was that, during the past few decades, GCSAA presidents developed a nasty habit of changing jobs – maybe several times – during their tenure on the board. Obviously, this was a considerable downside of serving on the board, and it's been unpleasant for the individuals involved. However inconsequential it might seem in terms of the forced unemployment of several well-known leaders, this trend had one other ironic side effect when it came to the Col. John Morley Award. The uncomfortable question became: Which of the much-traveled past president's former employers should be featured in the painting? Should it be the course he was at for the first three years on the board? Or the one he was at for the next two years? Or the facility he desperately latched onto a couple of weeks before the national conference after he'd decided to "pursue other opportunities" for the third time?

My theory was the award should become the Col. John Morley Memorial Collage of all the past president's previous employers.

You could give the poor sap a composite painting of the two or five or seven different courses he'd worked at while he'd move through the chairs, and he could deliver copies to all of his former bosses. Somehow, this notion didn't go over well with the elected leadership.

Anyway, back to the topic at hand – the most coveted and incredibly prestigious Old Tom Morris Award, which was created in the early '80s to do two things:

1. Lend an air of credibility and celebrity to the event and the profession at large; and
2. Put butts in seats at the incredibly long and often excruciatingly boring annual "gala" that used to cap off conference week way back when.

Thankfully, they don't have the gala anymore, but many are still motivated to sit through the endless opening session to see a famous person accept the award. But, the original rationale still holds true. If a former U.S. president (Gerald Ford), a legendary entertainer (Bob Hope) or the most famous golfer in the universe (Arnold Palmer) was going to show up, the media would cover it, and attendees would skip a trip to the bar for a chance to say they'd been one of a couple thousand or so people who were there when the renowned so-and-so accepted the Old Tom Morris Award.

The problem is that many golf celebrity types usually have better things to do than show up to collect another award and allow their "brand" to be used for free for a group's PR purposes. In short, the number of famous people willing to whore themselves out for nothing has dwindled down to next to zero.

Thus, I'm sure the GCSAA board faced a difficult decision once again: Does it offer the award to some notable who's likely to turn it down, settle for some B-list celebrity who happens to be head-over-heels in love with the game and is willing to come for nothing, or go to plan C – give it to a dead guy who doesn't want money and, most definitely, doesn't have anything better to do?

Looks like it was plan C this year. **GCI**