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Blaine Pinkerton,
Regional Sales Manager



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Also, we didn't understand what the power of molecular science could bring to us, so we're still not where we should be in that arena. It's not the salvation, but it's another tool. You still have to have germ plasm to work with, but molecular breeding is a way of fast-tracking Mother Nature. But, because of the problems we've had with pollen containment, etc., we've ended up dragging around a boat anchor that's preventing us from making progress. (Breeders) failed to recognize that Mother Nature was still going to rule the roost. We'll overcome it eventually.

We're finally overcoming some of the barriers and starting to learn how to take advantage of the host of consistent DNA sequences. Our team is now inserting genes into plant materials all the time – just like Monstanto – and it turns out the genetic characteristic was already there in many cases – it was just turned off. The question is how to turn the sequences on and off.

We're making baby steps, but I think the USDA will eventually get comfortable with this because it's not introducing new sequences – it's all native. We're just taking advantage of inherent gene components.

Look into your crystal ball... What new varieties/standards for turf will we see in 10 years? 20 years?

Our new varieties are all targeted at concerns about natural resources. Water, heat dissipation, etc. We're working hard on living filtration systems to take brackish water and clean it up through natural processes. You'll hear more and more about zoysias that live in a saline environment that can pull the salt out of the soil and remediate the water and the soils. Salt extraction will be a hot new topic.

If you can preserve the soil, it's a phenomenal way to remove salt. Diamond zoysia is one of the most salt-tolerant plants you'll ever find. The zoysias will give us a whole different concept about how to manage salts and water.

You've known the man forever so give us your best Jim Beard story.

I have plenty, but here's the most recent. Just a few weeks ago, I read an obituary in the newspaper for a "James Beard" from Bryan, Texas – the same town Jim lives in – and I just about had a heart attack. Then I noticed that the deceased was 101. I was much relieved.

Jim Beard was one of the reasons I came to Tex along with Al Turgeon (now of Penn

State). They were among the best in the world. Garald Horst (now of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln) was in El Paso, too. It was a bird's nest on the ground in terms of wonderful people. In 1980, Jim Beard said we need to understand one thing: Water is king. He was right. Thirty years later, that's all we're talking about. But we were our own worst enemy.

What one thing haven't you accomplished that you wish you could have?

I submitted a design concept to build a sustainable course for patent protection and they just can't seem to understand the concept. The biggest nemesis for most superintendents is the perception that aeration or other cultural practices screw things up. My idea is to create a "chameleon" facility. It's a golf course that you could change from day to day. You could take a green, tee or fairway out of play to rest when it needs it. For every nine holes you need to build 11. Eighteen holes becomes 22. With the technology we have today, we can do that. It's cheaper, better, more interesting and actually creates more places to put houses. Unfortunately, it just doesn't work with the economy and couldn't get past a bull-headed patent examiner. Maybe it'll get built internationally.

Also, I'm frustrated that zoysia hasn't been used more on major sports venues. It's so wear-tolerant, but someone really has to grab the bull by the horns and market it. It doesn't wear out and it's so shade and salt tolerant. Lot's of people are looking at Diamond and are so amazed about how well it works for sports.

Finally, the (EPA's) WaterSense program is kind of a tragedy because it limits the amount of grass we use instead of which grasses we use. There are too many benefits to turf to limit our acreage because of misconceptions about turf. That's what we're working on today with the Urban Solutions Center here at A&M. Just Google "urban living laboratory" and check out what we're doing in terms of sustainability that combines LEED ideas with our standards for plant materials. It's a huge, ambitious project that will eventually become a global research facility.

How do students today compare to those of a decade or so ago?

They don't know the basics. They have wonderful book learning. It's like the reverse of Doug Petersan (of the Austin Golf Club).

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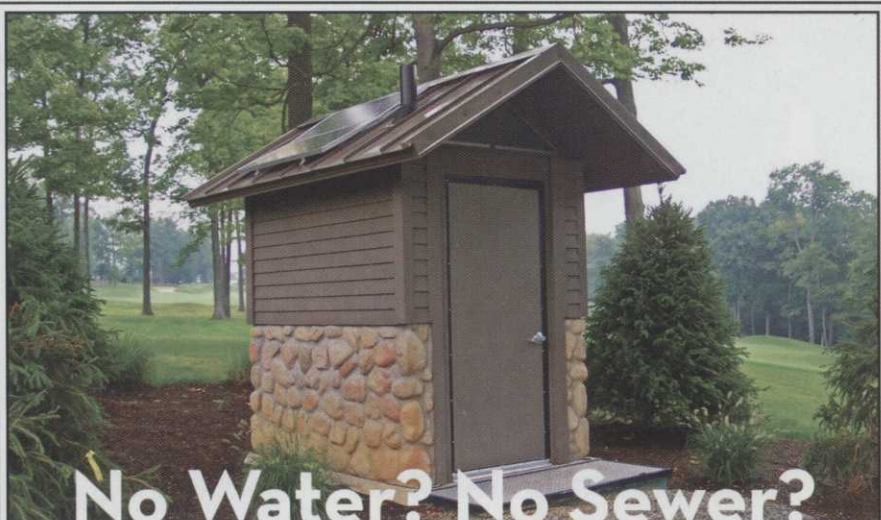
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GCI Q&A

He's a minimalist who maximizes performance because he understands the biology of the local ecosystem. The book learning isn't enough. They need more exposure to the guys like Doug who've been out there. Throwing water at stuff doesn't solve the problem.

What's the most common question you get from stressed-out superintendents?

"How do I do more with less and get away with it." If we understand the resiliency of the plants on golf courses we can do more with less. Take diseases for example. Everyone's always looking for which disease is the culprit. Sometimes, it's a cultural problem like salt in the irrigation water. It's too easy to fall into the "program" mentality and not really consider what the root problem is. Watering is often the last thing you should do and most green chairmen just don't understand that. The pressure to perform is contrary to using serious biology to manage the turf.

Then what's the most common problem?

Greens fail because the soil porosity doesn't change. You lose macropores and increase micropores. The problem is simple: too much water, not enough oxygen. When I started working with Jacobsen in 1987, they came out with the bayonet or vent tine. That technology literally manufactures macropores. You can better sustain microbial activity and microbes digest organic matter. Sometimes a holistic, sustainable, minimal approach is better than "wonder juice."

What do you do for non-turf fun?

Woodworking and fishing. Ken Mangum (of Atlanta Athletic Club) recently built a new course and had to cut down a couple of old growth cherry and black walnut trees. We had them shipped out here and I built my kitchen cabinets out of the cherry and several pieces of furniture out of the walnut. I used damned near every bit of those trees. We also have a 4,000-square-foot Diamond zoysia putting green at home, but that's another story.

Tell us about the happiest day of your life.

Years ago, I actually bought a DeLorean. I was on cloud nine, man. Yet, the second happiest day of my life was when I swapped it for a 2002 T-Bird. I've always been an early adopter, but sometimes you have to realize it wasn't the right decision.

Final question...what's next for you?

Fishing! In Oregon. Bye! GCI

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ASSISTANT SUCCESS GUIDE: SURVIVING AND THRIVING

It's not easy being an assistant superintendent who's ready to move on to your own facility.

Matt Rostal, golf course superintendent at Interlachen Country Club, Edina, Minn., sums it up well: "There are so many qualified people, so little jobs."

The golf course construction boom of the 1990s piqued students' interest in turfgrass management as a career, but the decline of rounds has led to a decrease in the number of jobs. Meanwhile, universities continue to churn out turf grads, making competition for existing assistant and superintendent jobs very tough.

On top of the sheer math making it difficult to be an aspiring superintendent today, the role of the "new" assistant is changing as the superintendent's off-the-course demands increase.

"The superintendent is taking more and more of a management/communi-

cation role and the assistant is assuming more day-to-day operational control of the maintenance staff," says consultant Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, president of Golf Agronomy International.

An increase in regulations and business demands of the superintendent profession have contributed to these changes, says Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas.

While the actual skill set an assistant needs to take the next step to become a superintendent hasn't changed, the odds of doing so have. As such, assistants need to stay on top of industry advancements, sharpen their management skills and hone their professional conduct to have a shot at the superintendent job they're looking for.

We hope the stories in this guide help. Let us know what you think and send your ideas for next year to gci@gie.net. **GCI**

**OPERATIONS: ADVICE
YOU SHOULDN'T FORGET**



**CAREER Q&A: MISSION:
MOVE UP THE LADDER**



**ETIQUETTE:
PROFESSIONAL PROTOCOL**





ADVICE YOU SHOULDN'T FORGET

Industry members dole out do's and don'ts for assistants to use in day-to-day operations.

Career advancement advice runs thick for assistant superintendents in the golf course industry (in fact, we provide some more on page 31). But what about the day to day? What practical nuggets do you need to know about managing the golf course, running the crew and being a great assistant overall?

We cast our net to compile this compendium of advice from industry members nationwide.



BY MARISA PALMIERI

DO

Do everything you can to treat your employees with the utmost respect. They are typically the ones working for the lowest wage and working under the most difficult conditions and the longest hours. Never miss an opportunity to say thank you to them for what they do. —Paul Jett, CGCS, Pinehurst (N.C.) No. 2

Start a journal of the daily activities at the course. You won't be able to remember everything you did and when or how you did it. The journal of agronomic activities will be invaluable when you get the opportunity to be in charge. —John Kaminski, assistant professor of turfgrass science at Penn State

Dress for success. Make sure the members can determine who is the worker and who is

the boss. Shave everyday and look neat. —Matt Schaffer, director of golf operations, Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, Pa.

Always work on doing it right the first time. —Ron Dahlin, CGCS, The Meadows Golf Club at Grand Valley State University

Have a positive attitude toward the superintendent and the staff. The staff takes on the personality of the assistant, so a positive assistant leads to a positive and productive staff. —Chad Miller, superintendent, Hillcrest Golf & County Club, Batesville, Ind.

Keep up with the latest research findings not only from your state or region, but from all over the nation. A number of local golf course superintendent associations have online access to the Turfgrass Information File, an extraordinary collection of scientific information about turf management at Michigan State University. If you don't

have access to this resource, work to create momentum within the association to join. —Doug Soldat, assistant professor, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Be sure that the line of communication between the golf course maintenance department and the membership/customer is strong. An ally in the clubhouse goes a long way to that end, as the face time the pro shop personnel has with customers dwarfs the time the maintenance folks have. —Bruce Gregory, PGA, CGCS, Liberty (Ind.) Country Club

Be "fair, firm and friendly," in that order, when dealing with subordinates. You're a boss and not their best buddy. —Tom Brown, CGCS, Chesapeake Bay Golf Club, Rising Sun, Md.

Play golf at your facility. This will give you a completely different perspective of the agronomic and playability issues at

your facility. Seeing the course through the golfer's eyes is a great way to fine tune your agronomic practices. —Kaminski

If you use tobacco now, QUIT; it only gets harder. —Schaffer

Let the superintendent handle interclub communications. If it's a light comment about the weather, that's fine, but let the superintendent handle sensitive issues in a committee setting, or on the course. —Ray Richard, consultant, Richard Associates, Cape Cod, Mass.

Manage people for success; be a great teacher. —Matt Rosenthal, superintendent, Interlachen Country Club, Edina, Minn.

Come to work at least a ½ hour before the staff so you are ready for changes. —Schaffer

Get to know common equipment operation and common faults; you have to be smarter than the operator and the ma-

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chine. Spend time in the shop and get a good overview from your equipment manager. Get a basic understanding of reel mower technicalities, equipment engine differences and specialty equipment like top dressers, aerators and sprayers. *—Mike Kriz, equipment manager, Arrowhead Country Club, Rapid City, S.D.*

Support the superintendent's policies and decisions in front of the crew whether you agree with them or not. Take up your disagreements with the superintendent one on one. *—Brown*



DON'T

Expect to learn it all in one year. *—Eric Bauer, director of grounds, The Club at Carlton Woods, The Woodlands, Texas*

Only speak English. *—Tucker*

Be afraid of the press. If you have a potential story, contact the newspaper or local television station. There's not a shortage of negative press about golf course management, but many of the positive aspects are often overlooked. *—Soldat*

Stop being a student. Continue to learn the fundamentals of agronomics while working on the course. Read articles, talk to your peers, and take classes through GCSAA to learn as much as possible. *—Kaminski*

Forget to wear sunscreen. Too many don't take the time to protect themselves when out on the course. Simply taking a few

Consider clever ideas to reduce costs in labor and eliminate overtime, like two shifts, part-time workers on afternoons and weekends and section workers to eliminate wasteful travel time on-course. *—Michael Vogt, CGCS, manager of the McMahon Group's Golf Division*

Read the operator's manuals and watch the training videos — all of them. *—Bill Hughes, equipment manager, The Loon Golf Club, Gaylord, Mich.*

Be an extension of your superintendent. If the superintendent

minutes each morning to apply sun block can help to prevent serious skin problems later in life. *—Kaminski*

Get caught up in daily activities that keep you from supervision and managing. *—Livingston*

Hesitate to ask questions! *—Flanagan*

Forget that you'll have to work to earn the crewmembers' respect. *—Hughes*

Ever mix a chemical without looking at the label. New products come out; rates and labels change. Just because you have been spraying this product for the last several years, it only takes a second to check the rate and make sure it is right. One incorrect spray application can quickly cost you a job. *—Jett*

Forget to have a life away from the golf course. Longevity in this business can only be achieved

is gone, execute the cultural practices in the same manner as he or she would do it. *—Troy Flanagan, superintendent, Anthem Country Club, Henderson, Nev.*

Have excellent communication skills. *—Stephen Tucker, equipment manager, Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club, Bradenton, Fla.*

Continually monitor the course, equipment, and staff with the idea of improving upon the entire operation. *—Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas*

by knowing when to go home. *—Brown*

Be close minded. Listen, learn and carry out the superintendent's plan as best you can. The assistant's job is to carry out the plans, not to undermine them if don't completely agree. *—Miller*

Give someone a job that you wouldn't do or haven't done yourself at some point. Lead by example. *—Brown*

Expect everyone to like you because some won't. *—Hughes*

Manage everyone the same way. People are different. Take time to figure out how they work and manage them accordingly. *—Schaffer*

Forget to take off your sunglasses and look people in the eye when you talk to them. *—Schaffer*

Ignore a member/golfer when they pass by. *—Richard*

Tell the truth. Owning up to a mistake goes a long way to establishing trust between the superintendent and you. *—Brown*

Learn to delegate, don't think you can do it all yourself. In fact, when you are working who is supervising? Give yourself jobs that allow you to move within the ranks. *—Schaffer*

Serve as a course information conduit to the superintendent. Mention good and bad news. If you see a staffing or cultural problem, say something. *—Richard*

Forget that golf is now centered on a business that needs to be concerned with profits and losses. Just because you have an approved budget doesn't necessarily mean the amount of that budget should or must be spent. *—Vogt*

Automatically say "no." People don't like to hear it. *—Rostal*

Take corrective criticism personally. It's meant to help, not hinder. *—Hughes*

Expect to have a 9-to-5 job, expect to have holidays off or expect to become rich as an assistant. *—Bauer*

Badmouth equipment just because it's not what you had at your last course. *—Kriz GCI*

What advice do you believe all assistant superintendents should follow? What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were an assistant? E-mail us at gci@gie.net and we'll print our favorites.