

ROLL CALL

Frank Dobie, superintendent and general manager at the Sharon Golf Club, Sharon Center, Ohio, has been selected to receive the 2011 GCSAA Col. John Morley Distinguished Service Award.

Paul Backman, the former executive director of the Western Washington Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Northwest Turfgrass Association, was posthumously awarded the 2010 Distinguished Service Award by the Northwest Golf Media Association.

SAGE Golf Group Worldwide appointed **Chris Freeman** the new general manager at Raveneaux Country Club in Spring, Texas.

Aspiring golf course superintendent **Victor Manuel de la Cruz** won a \$9,500 scholarship to Michigan State University from Valderrama Golf Club in Sotogrande, Spain.

Clemson University turfgrass pathology professor **Bruce Martin** receives distinguished service award this month from the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association.

Chris Vernon joined Jacobsen as vice president of marketing and product management.

The South Carolina Golf Course Owners Association selected **Legend Oaks Golf Club in Summerville** as the 2010 South Carolina Golf Course of the Year, and **Brian Ouse** of Daniel Island Club the Tommy Cuthbert Employee of the Year.

Nutrients PLUS has appointed **Jeff Thrasher** to head the company's national distribution and business development.

STEC Equipment hired **David Smith** as sales representative and promoted **Jason Sentell** to director of sales and marketing.

Yamaha Golf-Car Co. has placed **Kevin Norcross** in charge of its direct nationwide sales team.

Architect Robert Von Hagge passes

Global golf course architect **Robert von Hagge** died Oct. 16 at the age of 83.

Von Hagge's professional life stretched from his early teen years as a caddy to international fame as a master golf course designer and architect. During his career, Von Hagge vaulted to the top ranks of golf course design and architecture, became a dominant force in the European and Mexican golf world and moved into golf design throughout the world. Many consider him one of the most influential course designers in the history of golf.

During his six-plus decades as a master golf course designer, von Hagge created some of the world's most outstanding and award-winning courses, and has been responsible for the design, re-design or partial design of more than 250 courses in the United States, Mexico, the Caribbean and 16 foreign countries.

Les Bordes, set in the middle of the Loire Valley in France and ranked as the No. 1 golf course in Europe, is considered von Hagge's piece de resistance.

HUNGER PAINS

Is your crew taking its lunch break? According to a recent study conducted by Monster.com, 60 percent of workers responded that they're not taking their full lunch break, 7 percent of who are risking their health by not eating lunch at all.

"Taking a lunch break is very important to keep healthy and refreshed," says Monster rep Jeffrey Quinn. "Our bodies and brains need fuel to operate... if people feel they're too busy, they should take stock of their workload and try to plan (lunch) into their day."

The data also indicates that US workers, when compared to their international brethren, are most likely to eat while they work. However, 58% of French workers say they take their full lunch break.





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CONSUMER RESEARCH

A glimpse of how golfers' behavior affects the business of golf facility maintenance and management.



Ball and club sales

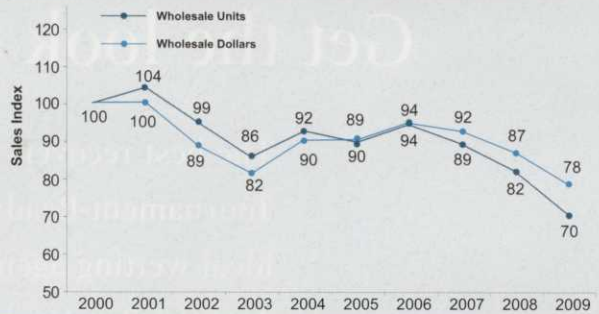
This recent recession has been more severe than previous ones, and effects on golf equipment sales have been meaningful, according to recent research conducted by the National Golf Foundation.

With regard to club shipments, units and dollars peaked in 2005-2007, and have since declined. Units are off 21 percent from peak and dollars are off 27 percent, according to NGF data.

Ball shipments also continued to drop in 2009. Units are off 25 percent over the past three years and dollars are off 17 percent, according to NGF data.

However, the NGF does not believe this decline is unusual, relative to the drop in consumer demand for similar discretionary items.

GOLF BALLS



GOLF CLUBS



Source: National Golf Foundation





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Tim Moraghan, Principal, ASPIRE Golf (tmoraghan@aspire-golf.com). Follow Tim's blog, Golf Course Confidential at <http://www.aspire-golf.com/buzz.html> or on Twitter @TimMoraghan

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM CANADA

No matter what happens on a golf course, no matter how many precautions we take, much of the public perceives golf courses as places of danger, spreading pesticides and other chemicals into our food and water and unfairly using water for a sport that only benefits an elite few.

This is not a problem unique to the U.S., which is why I spoke with Teri Yamada, executive director of Integrated Pest Management of Canada, a group teaching turf grass, landscape and vegetation managers how to properly use and apply pesticides.

Based on her experience in Canada, Teri has great ideas about dealing with public misconceptions. Everyone needs to be on the lookout for the following actions that can severely affect our ability to do our jobs:

- Whether local, regional or statewide, cosmetic pesticide bans include pesticide management codes, which then can limit lawn pesticides, concentrates, weed and feed and non-essential pesticide prohibitions.

- Legislation begins at a local level then moves up the ladder. If local groups propose bans on pesticides, then explain the importance of pesticides throughout our communities – not just to golf.

- These usually result in the removal of products from store shelves or stringent requirements for application with lowered dosages for less environmental impact.

- Water is the next gold, so be alert for efforts to limit course irrigation, as well as lawns and private property.

Golf superintendents must become the leaders at the grass-roots level in educating politicians and voters. If we're unable to explain who we are and what we do, then these issues will be debated and decided at state capi-

tals and in Washington D.C. If it gets to that point, we will lose all control and should expect increased government oversight and bans. When dealing at local and state levels, keep in mind:

“Environmental groups deal in emotions, not facts, starting with the notion that they are trying to save the planet. We must convince people that we are trying to do the same.”

- It's about the bottom line. Laws are made and changed when someone's livelihood is affected.

- Environmental groups deal in emotions, not facts, starting with the notion they're saving the planet. Convince people you're doing the same.

- More citizens are in activist roles than ever before, especially women and young people, two groups who, while golf friendly, have not been good advocates.

- Superintendents must change the perception of how agronomics are managed. Stay on top of your community's environmental issues, from land preservation and water use in parks and ball fields to fertilizer runoff into local streams.

WATER. There is no more controversial subject and in the public's emotional way of thinking, golf is a big offender. Expect local groups to ask for closer monitoring of your water use. As with other environmental issues, get involved at the local level because this is where decisions will affect your ability to do your job.

- Document exactly how much water is used and when.
- Provide an accurate irrigation

audit prepared by accredited irrigation auditors. They should detail system improvements, upgrades and modification and reinforce the fact that water is not wasted. Note how water use changes during wide

climatic swings, not only on golf courses but everywhere.

PESTICIDES. The issues are similar, but not identical, to water. Whereas everyone expects ready access to clean water, they want to be free of pesticides; something we must teach is impractical and potentially harmful. The following should help:

- Learn to read public opinion and know what the local population believes about the environment. Watch for trends.

- Marshall the forces within the industry to make your case. There are plenty of resources available.

- Change golfer expectations. This will be difficult and take time.

- Produce conditions that are reasonable and safe. If you're not preparing a tournament course then don't make it look like one.

- Communicate with those who disagree and offer to educate them that standard golf practices are environmentally safe and produce a helpful, green resource.

- Bring accredited environmental decision makers to meetings, but be sure they speak plainly and can handle negative reactions. **GCI**



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Q&A

The famed Pinehurst clocks are running backwards right now as No. 2 “devolves.”

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Bob Farren and his team at **PINEHURST** are doing the unthinkable – turning back the clock on the look and feel of one of America’s greatest courses.

When you think of “brand,” you probably think of Coke or Nike or McDonald’s.

Now think about brands among America’s great courses. Augusta National is perfection. Whistling Straights is rugged, sandy and windblown. Oakmont is harder than forged steel.

For two decades, the brand at Pinehurst No. 2 has been manicured but menacing. The brand grew as it became a favored U.S. Open site. As golf evolved in the new millennium, the fairways narrowed, the bunkers became whiter and tighter and flawless turf became the standard from every tee box to every buried-elephant Don Ross green.

So why is owner Robert Dedman, Jr., having his best-in-class maintenance team work with Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore to blow up that carefully cultivated brand and return the course to the look and feel of 70 years ago?

We asked Bob Farren, the guy who oversees all of Pinehurst’s courses, that very question and got some interesting answers.

Farren is a second-generation superintendent born and bred in small-town West Virginia. His pop started on a small nine-holer he’d helped to build, graduated

to an 18-hole public facility and finished his career on the private side, so Farren got to see all aspects of the business from the time he was in diapers.

Growing up, his dad’s course was on one side of the neighborhood and the elementary school where his mom taught was on the other. “I was either at the school shooting baskets on the playground or out on the course with my dad pretty much all the time,” he recalls. He started working for his dad at 12 (“I thought it was fun until I figured out they were supposed to pay me”) and by high school he’d caught the bug and decided to follow in his father’s professional footsteps. And, early on, he decided for reasons now obscure that he wanted to end up working in North Carolina. He would get his wish in a big way.

He earned his degree in parks and recreation management in 1979, went to work for the county surrounding Charleston, W.Va., and got his first taste of multi-course management. He started as an intern and worked his way up to supervisor of the country’s four courses. When a

position opened at Pinehurst, that experience – along with the fact that Pinehurst’s then six courses were being managed by fellow West Virginian Lou Metz – really paid off. He started in 1982 as superintendent of the No. 4 course at a time when the resort was in bankruptcy. He left briefly in 1984 when Club Corporation of America bought the facility and there was uncertainty about Bob Dedman Sr.’s plans, but quickly came back once CCA’s vision for the property became clear. “Looking back, he was the savior. He bought it at the perfect time and had the resources to do the capital improvements. Property values went up fast and memberships sold like crazy.”

Farren’s return in 1985 to become superintendent of No. 2 was also the beginning of his partnership with his longtime boss, Brad Kocher. He quickly moved up to become Kocher’s second-in-command and stayed in that role for 20 years of growth, major championships and success. Now, after five

years at the helm of Pinehurst’s course operations, we asked Farren to look back on his time in the Sand Hills and to lead us through the fascinating and controversial decision to take the No. 2 course back to the future.

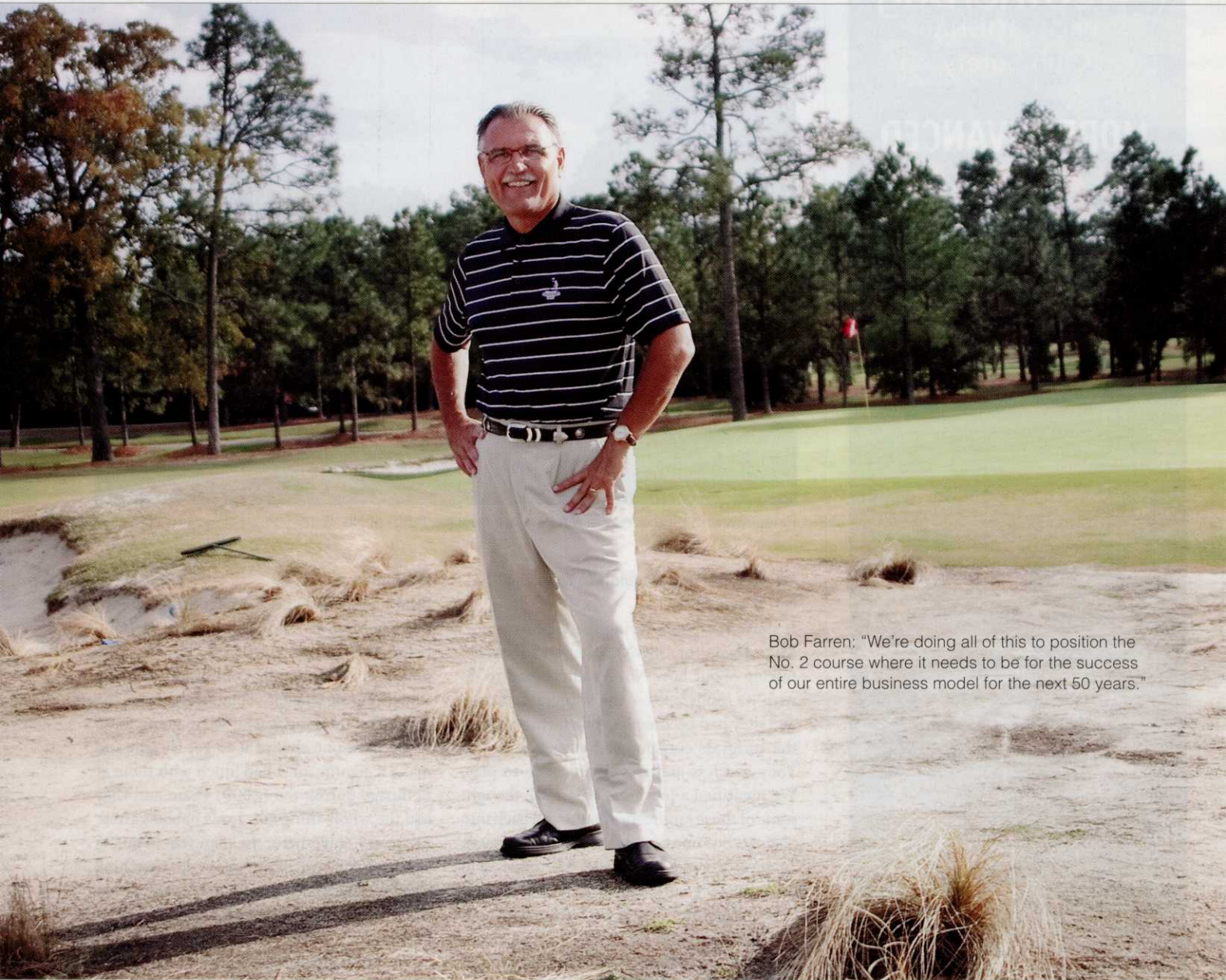
How has your job evolved over the years first working with Brad Kocher and now in the director role yourself?

Brad and I were a great team. We had awesome resources from a capital standpoint and the owners had confidence in our ability to deliver. I was able to grow myself and grow my career and be involved in so many different things from golf course construction, reconstruction, redesign, major championships, the resort component, the membership component – I got to have my finger on all of them without having to change jobs or relocate.

It was all timing. The membership grew by leaps and bounds in the ‘80s and ‘90s. The big key to success was the arrival of (legendary director of golf) Don Padgett in 1987. He’d been at Desert Mountain and was a past president of the PGA and was extremely well-respected and



Donald Ross has no comment about the changes at No. 2.



Bob Farren: "We're doing all of this to position the No. 2 course where it needs to be for the success of our entire business model for the next 50 years."

smart. He was largely responsible for attracting the attention of the golf community and getting us back into the mix for championships. It was largely because of him that we got the Women's Amateur in '89, plus the PGA Tour Championship '91 and '92. That led to the Senior Open in '94 and the Opens in '99 and '05.

Mr. Padgett really was the key. There are not very many golf destinations as historic as Pinehurst where someone from management has a building named after him, but he does. He was a very key part of our success.

Describe the Pinehurst business culture.

It's all about return on investment. Every dollar we spend, we consider an investment and not an expense. Mr. Dedman Sr. believed in reinvesting resources and capital providing you get the right return. Brad really understood and respected the business plan. He could put conditioning into quantifiable terms.

Most courses spend a great deal of money to reach the desired threshold of conditioning. Once you go beyond that, the return diminishes. We do, I

think, a good job of balancing that. You can have an 18-hole facility with a \$500,000 budget and people will enjoy that. But, if you can spend another \$100,000 and bring in \$200,000 more (in revenue) because of that increased quality, then you should. If it only generates \$75,000, you shouldn't. That's our philosophy in a nutshell.

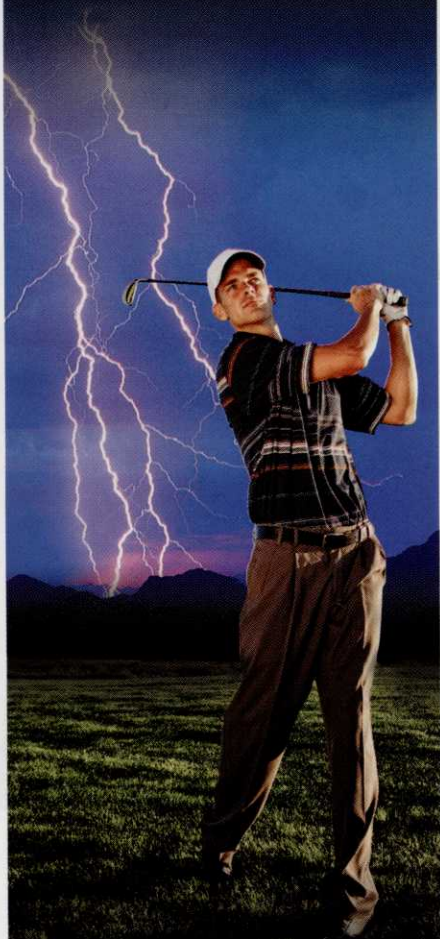
I gave a talk (at GIS) last year in San Diego on sustainability, and part of that is economic sustainability. Up until the past three or four years, people were spending a lot of money on things

that they've had to ratchet back like overseeding wall-to-wall or hand-raking bunkers. Now they're finding some of that isn't sustainable from an economic standpoint.

It really comes down to knowing what people will pay for. If you're a member-owned club and you tell them it's going to cost \$50,000 to overseed next year and they don't want to pay an increase, you have to tell them what that means. At every course, there needs to be a menu of things to spend money on and they have to choose.

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Q&A



Pine straw and pine cones in bunkers are now the norm at No. 2.

What drove the decision to redo the No. 2 course?

It started in 2008 during the U.S. Amateur. Mike Davis (of USGA), Brad and I started talking about how No. 2's allure had to do with its sandscapes – the wiregrass areas – and they had become less of a factor because the turfgrass corridor had grown so broad. They had less and less significance to play. We identified a few areas where we thought some of those sandscapes could spill back into play. At the same time, we started seeing more “natural” courses on the rise. There seems to be a romance with the Bandon Dunes, Erin Hills, Whistling Straights, Shinnecock and the like and there was a buzz about Doak, Crenshaw and other guys doing that kind of minimalist design.

The more we looked at No. 2's history and why it got its reputation, the more we realized it went back to the '40s and '50s and that original minimalist, sandscape look. When you read the quotes from great golfers who played here, it's clear they loved the course because the ball would leave the fairway and you never knew what was in store after that. That aspect had been diminished over 20 years because of the improvements we'd made in the turf. Ironically, the same reputation that had gotten us those championships was beginning to change because of what we were doing to accommodate those championships. We had to reconsider whether to stay on that course or turn back the clock.

How did those conversations become a

full-blown plan?

Brad had retired and the next thing I knew, Bob Dedman Jr. and Don Padgett II (who came from Firestone to be Pinehurst's president) were totally committed to doing something significant. They really drove the train. The thinking was, if we're going to do it, we have one shot at it to get it right and make it significant. I had lunch with them at Bethpage during the (2009) Open and they laid the whole thing out. I was flabbergasted. As we say down here, the plan was to go big or go home. The decision was to do something dramatic to recapture everyone's imagination and change the way people think about the Pinehurst brand. So, that's when the plan to look at naturalizing a few areas became a much larger project and that's where Ben Crenshaw came into the picture.

Why Crenshaw?

Who has the respect in the industry as far as history, knowledge, passion and credibility? Who would you select to help you with a project like this from all the experts in the country today? Who's not interested particularly in leaving their personal stamp on a great course? It had to be Crenshaw.

Did you have to gulp hard when you realized that a lot of the work you'd done for two decades was about to be undone?

(Laughs). It's funny, everyone – including Bill and Ben – has been very sensitive to the fact that I'm emotionally involved in everything that's been done here for 25 years. Look, it has