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THE INTERPERSONAL ARTS

Chris Carson is without a doubt one of the smartest superintendents in the industry. And while I don't doubt he has impeccable turf maintenance acumen, he by far has an impressive amount of street smarts.

I was fortunate to receive an invite to attend the 2012 Green Start Academy, which took place in early October at Bayer's research facility in Clatyon, N.C. Green Start is an annual educational program, jointly supported by Bayer and John Deere, that brings together 50 of the nation's top assistants for two days of mentoring and executive-level training.

It was the second year I've attended the program and Chris, who is the superintendent at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield, N.J., gave the send-off speech to a captivated audience of 20-something assistants.

In a nutshell, Chris talked about the things they don't teach superintendents in turf school that included a healthy dose of practical lessons to land that first big job. With a mix of humor and Scared Straight, Carson breaks down and dissects the art interviewing and how assistants can use practical interpersonal communication skills to land their first superintendent's position.

For example, Carson advises in a cover letter or during an interview not to spend undue time focusing on what every other assistant is engaged in. Rather, highlight what sets you apart from the crowd and why an employer wants you on their staff, or at the very least in for an interview. Or, knowing a little something about the golf course operation or its parent company prior to the interview is a great way to show your interest in the job. The best one: always say "Thank you" at the conclusion of an interview. Hey, it's not just good manners; it's good business.

It really struck me how important many of Chris's core points are and how they transcend into the workplace, especially those that deal with how individuals interact and communicate with one another. Regardless of your title at your golf course facility or the nature of the meeting, here are some of Chris's key tips that really enhance professionalism and help to get your point across.



Mike Zawacki

Editor

ENTHUSIASM. Express conviction when you communicate. Why do you want that job, want the best price possible for a herbicide program, require a new fryer in the clubhouse kitchen, or think it's in the long-term best interest of the course to engage that irrigation upgrade in the offseason?

EYE CONTACT. Not looking someone in the eyes is a major no-no. In addition to conveying a feeling of ambivalence toward the other person, a pair of unfocused, wandering eyes sends the message that you may be less than truthful, or maybe just full of it.

EXPERTISE. Be a know-it-all, literally. Regardless of the problem, be the guy at your club

who either knows all the answers, or knows how to get them in short order. Be one of the first people consulted when there's a problem.

LEADERSHIP. This almost goes hand-in-hand with the previous point. Always know what direction your department is headed and how the decisions you make support that course heading. Even better, always have a three-year plan in play.

EXPAND YOUR NETWORK. Make a point to forge networks with all of the key players within your facility. In doing so, make sure they understand not only what you do on a daily basis, but the problems you might trying to overcome. Players and club members don't see boundaries. They complain to anyone about at a facility about playing conditions. It's good to have people who have your back and can explain why things are they way the are.

It struck me that in this digital age we've lost the art of a good handshake. Carson deals with the handshake issue with a good dose of humor, but his point is no laughing matter. A good, solid handshake is make-or-break moment for a lot of people. Think of the last time you met someone and got the dreaded "dead fish." That first impression is a lasting impression, so meet it with a firm sense of confidence. **GCI**

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FEEDBACK

EDITOR'S NOTE: News of Stanley Zontek's sudden passing in late August took many in the industry by surprise. Pat's column about Stan generated a lot of feedback and online discussion.

You can read Pat's column, "For Stanley" by entering bit.ly/PqNBzo into your Web browser.

Remembering Stan

I just finished reading your article about Stanley Zontek. Thank you for writing that piece. As a lot of people in the turf industry can claim, I, too, had a long-standing relationship with Stanley. He truly was a great man and passionately loved the game.

As you stated, Stan was "a great storyteller." In your article you mentioned the White House putting green. I had the honor of working closely with Stanley from 1997-2004 on the White House putting green. The many trips to the White House to consult on the green (50 plus) trips were always interesting.

Just a few days before his passing Stanley visited us at Woodmont Country Club for our Turf Advisory Service (TAS) visit. He did mention he hadn't been feeling too well as of late, but he had the normal Stanley passion for what he did.

As you stated, Stanley will really, really be missed by all us in the industry.

James Weaver
Woodmont Country Club
Rockville, Md.

To make a donation

Donations in Stanley's memory may be made to the following organizations:

American Diabetes Association
Stanley J. Zontek Memoriam
PO Box 11454
Alexandria, VA 22312
1 (800) 232-3472
www.diabetes.org

PA Turf Research Innovation Fund
Penn State University
c/o PA Turf Research Innovation Fund
240 Agricultural Administration Building
University Park, PA 16802

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[REPORTER'S **NOTEBOOK**]

Great White North

Our intrepid globetrotting editor at large Bruce R. Williams recently attended the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's Fall Field Day in Osoyoos, British Columbia. Members met in the Okanagan Valley for several days of education, networking and golf.

Here are tidbits from his reporter's notebook:

- For those that have never visited the Okanagan Valley it is a beautiful place. The drive south from Kelowna airport takes one through a valley rich in agriculture – apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, plums and apples – but surrounded by desert. A dozen or more golf courses can be found close to Highway 97 as it winds down from Kelowna to Osoyoos.
- Osoyoos is the only desert in all of Canada and is known for its warm climate and warm water in the local lake.
- Sonora Dunes Golf Course – which held a 9-hole tournament – is a desert-style course built in a very natural setting. It is nestled among the rolling desert hills and lush vineyards of Osoyoos.
- Sonora Dunes had holes at a variety of distances. Six of the holes were Par 4's that varied in length from 245 yds. to 365 yds. Add a couple of Par 3's at 108 and 139 yds. along with the only Par 5 at 482 yds. and you have a fun and enjoyable track to play. Fairways were wide enough to place your tee shot and large greens were very receptive to mid and short range iron shots.
- The desert was not forgiving should you hit an errant shot wide of the rough. The course was in excellent condition and hats off to the staff for providing such a great track. A great time was had by the full field of 72 participants. Winners of the two-ball event were Bert McFadden, the superintendent at Georgian Bay Golf Club, and Peter Bondy, superintendent at Furry Creek Golf and Country Club.
- The main event was held on Sept. 17th at the NK'MIP Canyon Desert Golf Course. NK'MIP is Okanagan for "bottomland" and refers to the north end of Lake Osoyoos where the river meets the lake. This course is a short 20-minute drive from Spirit Ridge and in the town of Oliver. The course offered a striking blend of natural contrasts divided into the desert-dominated Canyon Nine and the laid-back Grove Nine. The layout includes a vineyard, sage and stone vistas and the glorious mountains in the background. Host superintendent Ken Bruniski had the course in tournament condition for his peers.



TURF SHARK

Just when you thought it was safe to go back onto the course... there's a shark on the grass. At least, that's what happened at San Juan Hills Golf Club when a 2-foot leopard shark landed at the 12th tee, dropped from the clear blue sky.

A course marshal found the wounded shark – it had small puncture wounds in its body – and took it back to the clubhouse, according to Melissa McCormack, director of golf operations. Golfers were clear of the area when the small shark was carried from the water by a bird and was dropped over the course.

They kept the shark in a bucket to take it back to the ocean, where it swam off, probably eager to forget the afternoon it spent outside the water.

From THE FEED

Hurricane Sandy came knocking on New Jersey's door Oct. 29 and carved a deadly swath into the east coast, upended millions of lives through the week. We at the GCI Intergalactic HQ hope everyone took the proper precautions getting ready for this storm and remained safe and were another story.

Photos of flooding and damage were showing up on Twitter as superintendents watched the storm plow through - from a distance.

Ryan Howard, superintendent at Winters Run Golf Club in Bel Air, Md., kept us all updated on course damage, including some heavy flooding.

Ryan Howard, @TWRyanHoward

Winters Run creek about to breach. Won't be long before 5 holes are snorkeling.



4 hours ago. This bridge becomes a dam if trees fall. Go easy #sandy.

Got antsy and drove back to work and now almost home. Dickey ride. Fortunately course holding well so far. Creek has breached but minor.

5.25" caught in rain gauge so far since this morning. But it's coming down sideways. Not sure how to quantify that. Big thing is water looked clear of debris.

Driving into the club ranks right up there on one of the dumbest things I have done. #thelistislong

Very grateful to say we were spared by #sandy with minor tree damage and flooding. Winters Run GC will be closed for a few days to dry out.

Join the conversation
on Twitter @GCI Magazine!



Fuzzy forecast

Winter can have a profound impact on turf condition, so it's no surprise that many superintendents want to know what Mother Nature is cooking up for Winter 2012-13. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently released what can only be described as a fuzzy best guess for the winter.

"The science behind seasonal prediction is in its infancy," said Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, in an official statement. "Despite recent advances, this year's winter outlook has been difficult."

So many climate influences - such as El Nino, El Nina and the North Atlantic Oscillation - play a role in what winter will turn out to be. NOAA climatologists say there is considerable uncertainty with the specific temperature and precipitation forecasts for Winter 2012-13.

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As of mid October, here's what NOAA thinks might happen:

- Above-average warmth is expected this winter from the Rockies to the Plains states.
- States from the Great Lakes to the Northeast and Southeast have equal chances of seeing below, above or near-average temperatures this winter.
- Below-average precipitation in the northwestern US and the Upper Midwest.
- Above-average precipitation is expected from eastern Texas eastward along the Gulf Coast to central Georgia and northern Florida.
- The High Plains, Southwest, Northeast, Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic have equal chances of seeing below, above or near-average precipitation.



Marathon men

Golfers usually want to get as many rounds in as they can before the end of the season, but two brothers-in-law playing at Pinewood Golf Course took it to the extreme. Erik Haselius and Dave Butts clocked seven full rounds in one day at the public 9-hole course.

They played 63 holes each to take advantage of an all-you-can-golf deal on a Sunday, starting at 9:15 a.m. and only wrapping up because the sun went down. A quick stop for food was their only break from swinging for the tee. Thanks to the deal, the marathon only cost them \$39 total, including green fee and cart rental - a final cost of about 31 cents per hole to each of them.





Monroe Miller retired after 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk CC in Madison, Wis. He is a recipient of the 2004 USGA Green Section Award, the 2009 GCSAA Col. John Morley DSA Award, and is the only superintendent in the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame. Reach him at groots@charter.net.

THE FIRST GREEN SECTION AGRONOMIST

Like so many golf course superintendents, the USGA Green Section was an invaluable resource and positive influence throughout my career.

The Green Section agronomists have always been willing speakers at chapter meetings and state turf conferences. They often have a presence at regional meetings. We could see and visit with them at meetings where players gathered, a group who recognized their expertise and credibility, and respected them for that. Those lucky enough to attend the GIS could also attend their annual Green Section conference.

They all have written extensively and well on the full spectrum of golf turf issues. The Green Section research program has answered some of golf turf's most difficult questions. And if your course subscribed to the Turf Advisory Service, you could talk to an agronomist one-on-one at your course for half a day and get advice and help troubleshooting your toughest problems.

We almost always had Green Committee members with us, and I always was anxious to get the report. Our Club figured it was one of the best bargains of any given year.

It was only natural that I was thinking about the Green Section last fall at

Charlie Wilson with the first USGA Green Section vehicle. Presenting him the keys is Ed Lowery, the youngster who caddied for Francis Ouimet in the 1913 U.S. Open. Lowery went on to become a successful car dealer.



Symposium was Charles G. Wilson, a colleague of O.J.'s and his successor at Milorganite. O.J. also hired Charlie. When O.J. made him an offer to join the Milorganite staff in 1955, Charlie was working as a USGA Green Section agronomist in California. He was, in fact, the USGA's first visiting agronomist.

The story of Charlie's trip to that USGA post is an interesting one.

Charlie Wilson is a member of the "greatest generation." World War II

Charlie returned home and enrolled in the University of Maryland. Despite an urban upbringing, he chose agriculture as his major and area of study.

Trips through Washington's nicer neighborhoods got him to wondering if some of the residents might need help with their yard work. Cold calls led to a lawn business, a nice supplement to his GI Bill. He soon figured out he needed to know more about grass and turf, a conclusion that led him to the USDA Plant Industry Section in Beltsville, Md., just a short distance away.

At that time the USGA Green Section had an office there. The resources on turf science and practices were extensive, but rules wouldn't allow reading material to leave the building. So Charlie was there for many hours, reading past Green Section Records, other journals and books. He was fascinated by the literature and the science of turf.

Dr. Fred Grau, The Green Section Director, couldn't help but take an interest in Charlie, going so far as to offer him a summer job. To do so, Charlie hired college kids to keep his lawn care business going and stuck with the USGA job, too, until he graduated in 1950 with a B.S. degree in agronomy.

It was at this time that Dr. Grau and the USGA offered him a job as a full-time agronomist.

Charlie is 91 years old now, but you would never know it by seeing him – with his ramrod straight posture – or by talking to him. I swear his memory is like a steel trap.

our Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium. The Green Section's Bob Vavrek is key in helping plan and present the program, which was started 46 years ago as a way to honor the career of O.J. Noer. The man who started the

broke out while his family was living in Washington, D.C. He enlisted in the Navy, served 37 months in the Pacific and at one point served under a guy who later became U.S. President – John F. Kennedy. The war ended and