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## SWING THOUGHT

One of the big misconceptions about all of us who make a living in this silly business is that we play golf all the time. Bet you've heard that one a million times huh?

The truth is the average insurance agent probably plays more rounds than most of us. And anyone who's played once in the past five months has played more than me. I just occurred to me that I haven't touched a club since the Carolinas GCSA tournament last November.

But, by the time you read this, I hope to have had a chance to get out. It might actually crack 50 degrees here in Cleveland soon and I will probably sneak down to one of our fantastic local Cleveland Metroparks courses and whack some balls around. But, before I do, I will go through my annual ritual of finding a swing thought for the year.

Each season, I pick a swing thought in a futile attempt to find that one thing – that one crazy little thing – that will convert me from truly lousy to happily mediocre. Last year it was “don't move your nose.” That kind of worked. My head was a little steadier and my body was a little quieter. It didn't keep me from going a mile past parallel or from swinging waaaaaay too hard most of the time. But, it gave me something to concentrate on. It gave me a simple goal.

In talking with superintendents over the last month who've all been waiting for the long delayed season to begin (the polar opposite of 2012), I've asked them about their “swing thought” for this agronomic season. What simple watchword or concept are they going to focus on every day to strive for constant improvement this season?

For a couple, it was “Soil.” They're attempting to use the season to fix imbalances in soils that cause so many other issues in the green stuff growing above it.

For another, it was “Balance.” He's trying to

keep his home life as positive and productive as his work life.

For a very old friend, it was “Survive.” He feels like he has a target on his back and he's worried he's lost the support of some key members and his GM.

I hate the fact that “Survive” has become the dominant thought for anyone as they begin another season in this profession. It shouldn't be like that, but it is. We are in a cycle in our industry right now where experience isn't valued enough, there are far more qualified people than there are jobs, and stress – which has always been an occupational hazard – is at an all-time high for many.



**Pat Jones**  
Editorial director and publisher

Going into a season fearing the worst is simply wrong. It's wrong that he's in that position and can't really talk to others about it (he worries word will get out and the vultures will start to circle looking to snag the job if it comes open). It's wrong that he can't communicate openly

with key folks at his facility and try to work things out (they don't understand, he says). And, it's wrong that he – like many others – may simply be a victim of the fact that the club is restless and wants to make a change for the sake of making a change.

That's a crappy thing. And “Survive” is a crappy thought to have in your head for the season.

Instead, why not focus on “Thrive”? Why not let go of what you can't control and focus on doing a great job with what you can? Why not give off a positive vibe and help to lift others around you? Why not do your best under tough circumstances? Why not adopt an attitude that you can and will not just make it, but do it really well?

Why not make “Thrive” your watchword for the year?

Oh...but don't forget to update your resume...just in case.

Have a great year! **GCI**

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## Anachronism snafu

I just had a look at the water quality article from Carmen Magro ("Drop by drop," February 2012). Either he or your editors made an error in one of the most important water quality parameters...

I'm sure I make plenty of errors, too, but I can't help but speak up. That particular error of misspelling sodium adsorption ratio and by so doing confusing the meaning is a particular concern of mine. I don't like claiming that TDS is total dissolved salts, either, for that should be total dissolved solids. I don't pick at every little error, but the SAR one is inexcusable and I wish it would never occur again.

Micah Woods, Ph.D.  
Chief scientist  
Asian Turfgrass Center

*Editor's Note: We don't like errors, either. We forwarded Micah's concerns to Carmen who readily admitted he was in error. SAR should have been "sodium adsorption ratio" and we should have been more clear in his discussion of "total dissolved solids" (TDS).*

## In praise of the app

The new app is excellent. I didn't check it out until after the GIS show, but I am impressed. GCI definitely has become the most relevant, informative and best all around of the industry's publications.

Greg Cormier, CGCS  
Director of golf course operations  
Nashawtuc Country Club  
Concord, Mass.

## Kudos

Congratulations on the hard work you put into GCI. I personally think it's the best publication in the business. GCI is the one magazine I still read instead of checking all the digital outlets at my disposal. I really enjoy your unique perspective on our business and find your contributors are very well informed with their fingers on the pulse of the current climate in the industry. Keep up the quality work and thank you.

Thad Thompson  
Superintendent  
Terry Hills Golf Course  
Batavia, N.Y.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We received an unprecedented amount of feedback about Pat's February Parting Shots column. If you haven't read it yet, enter [bit.ly/Xqr5vu](http://bit.ly/Xqr5vu) into your Web browser. If you're using the iPad/iPhone app, just click the image to access a copy of the column.

### True believers

Wow, a column on something Pat has never done for a career. While you have been around this business a long time, how can you give advice without ever stepping into our shoes? I read your article and you pointed out some negatives, but I have to tell you after 40 years I am ready and looking forward to 41 and many more. I am only 53, so I hopefully have a ways to go.

So maybe this is the root for a new article. How do you reinvent yourself every year to stay motivated, or what motivates a superintendent to stay in this business a lifetime?

First for me is a smile from a golfer who

loved what they just played... from making a long putt... from seeing the sunrise with me, from one of staff just waving at them... Golfers are people who are on their play-grounds that we get to manage. We provide them with a recreational playing surface and we should relish that fact every day. If you are having a bad day you really have to step back and ask what is causing it? How can I control that negative?

I love seeing a new employee "get" what it is all about. The pride in mowing a straight line on a green, from putting down a semi load of sod, or maybe getting a sprinkler head to work right, we have a living, breathing organism that we deal with every day. It can get tricky at times, but you have to figure out how to put new life in it every day to keep it going...

Now, I never encouraged my son to get in or to stay out of the business. He just fell in love with it at a very young age and has never wavered. I think it is so deeply

ingrained in him that this is all he will ever do. It is not about the money, it is about the product he puts forward every day and the challenges that drive him and his staff.

Pat, I love your last couple of paragraphs. You're correct. It is a passion and a love and a sense of accomplishment. It is hard to explain it to others, but I am very proud I am one of the few who gets to do this and I thoroughly embrace it.

**Rick Tegtmeier, CGCS**  
 Director of grounds  
 Des Moines Golf and Country Club  
 West Des Moines, Iowa

Great column in the February GCI. I really enjoyed it as I can totally relate to the story of your son.

I got started in this crazy business while in college, too. I worked at a course in the golf Mecca of Myrtle Beach, S.C. While attending Coastal Carolina University (for

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## FEEDBACK

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marketing) I got a job at The Witch Golf Links under Mr. Andy Apple. Like a lot of kids my age, I was thinking it was a good way for free golf.

I loved getting up in the early morning and experiencing everything you mention in the article. It was an incredible feeling every morning. I felt like I was one of very few who was up and awake. At that time (1997-99) I didn't even know that one could pursue golf course management as a career – you know, a golf course superintendent. I had never considered it... you mean people could actually make six figures doing this type of work? Two years of fun at The Witch and after graduation it was back to Chicago and time to get a real job.

After a year in the office world (23 years old at the time) I was being called back to what has ended up being my true life passion – a career in the golf course industry. I ended up going back to school, a junior college that offered a two-year turf degree program. While attending turf classes I also got hired on as an intern at Medinah Country Club, a fabulous opportunity. This is where I found out it was a great commitment as well as a unique profession and lifestyle.

As you so well explain "*sort of secret society of mad monks who live and breathe the turf and golf operations.*" I was able to move up the ranks quite quickly while at MCC, I went from intern, assistant, Course 2 superintendent and then onto superintendent of Course No. 3. I had absolutely nothing but passion for what I did. Many times it didn't even seem like work.

Anyway, I'm no longer at Medinah Country Club, nor am I a superintendent, but I still bleed the blood (2001-11). In all it was a great 10 years, but as you mention in the article, it is a lifestyle. I have recently transitioned into the sales side of the business, or as many have said to me, "The Dark Side."

People ask me if I miss it – being a golf course superintendent. I'm not always sure how to answer because my response can be quite lengthy – with what I miss and don't.

I honestly don't feel as if I have ever left – and that's a good feeling. I am as passionate about golf course maintenance now as I ever was – whether its helping out a low-budget, mom-and-pop nine-hole course, or If I'm helping get a big deal with high-end country club or resort. I have found out that

I not only have a great passion from my days working at Medinah, but I also have great passion for the business and what it is we all do within the golf industry. It is the best profession in the world.

I have found (since taking off my blinders while at MCC) this is even a better industry than I ever thought with lots of possibilities and lots of great people.

**Dave Kloss**  
JW Turf  
Allenton, Wis.

I've been reading Pat's column for many years, and must say he does a heck of job. Pat's February 2013 column (You Gotta Believe, 58) is awesome. Like so many of our peers, I am going through a very tough time on the course with the reductions in staff and funding. The cost of goods and employees has been increasing like crazy, yet the demand from our members to be better than every course on the planet continues. I've been managing golf maintenance in Florida for 24 years and have never been so close to saying "Take this job and shove it!" After reading your column it helped me say to myself "Hang in there... Things could be a lot worse." Thanks, Pat, for the words of encouragement.

**Jon S. Cockerham**  
Director of golf course maintenance  
Suntree Country Club  
Melbourne, Fla.

Great column. It was a straight control-print for me. I will share it with my interns for years to come. Well said!

**Nelson Caron, GCS**  
The Ford Plantation Golf Club  
Savannah, Ga.

"You'll be doing battle every day with a fickle bitch called mother nature..." The best line ever in a turf publication. It's not Grantland Rice's "...outlined against a blue-gray October sky the Four Horseman rode again," but it's up there.

**Robert Waller, CGCS**  
Marriott Golf  
Ocoee, Fla.