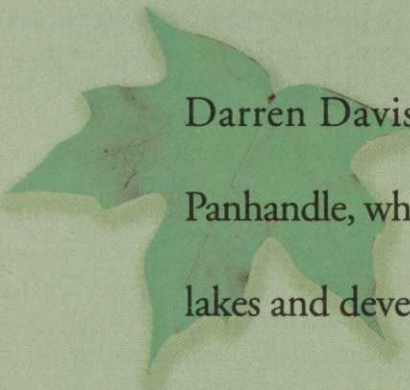


**They truly are tree huggers
at heart, but Darren Davis and
others have also discovered
that “environmentally aware”
is career smart**

Embracing *the* Environment *for Fun and Profit*



Darren Davis fondly recalls growing up in the rural Florida Panhandle, where he hiked the verdant woods, fished the bass-filled lakes and developed a deep respect for the environment.

Davis' sentiments for the environment haven't changed now that he's the golf course superintendent at Olde Florida GC in Naples, Fla. He is devoted to preserving wildlife in the woods and wetlands surrounding the course. And Davis has discovered that he and the environment are good for each other.

Davis says he is good to the environment on the golf course by limiting use of herbicides, allowing dead trees to stand and become nesting sites for birds, and growing wetland plants in lakes to filter runoff and absorb adulterants.

And Davis says the environment has been good to him by helping him build a positive image among his club's green-conscious members. They view Davis, who was awarded GCSAA's Environmental Steward Award for private courses in 1996, as a valuable employee who does much more than grow grass.

"They view me as a well-rounded person who cares about the environment," Davis says proudly. "A lot of them dedicate time and money to environmental groups, so they get excited when they hear that their superintendent cares about the environment."

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BY LARRY AYLWARD, MANAGING EDITOR

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Who would have thought that a superintendent and the environment could have a give-and-take relationship? Especially when you consider that superintendents are regarded as villains by some extreme environmentalists.

But Davis and other superintendents, in their quest to prove to the Paul Harveys of the world that they regard nature as a friend and not a foe, have realized that "environmentally aware" is a worthy element to list on a resume. And they are using their knowledge as leverage to further enhance their careers by gaining promotions, pay hikes and other advancements.

That's smart thinking because these superintendents are in a healthy job market. Most all U.S. golf courses are realizing that it makes good business sense to cuddle up to the environment, according to Audubon International. And many courses are providing proof that they are environmentally sensitive. Of the nearly 16,000 U.S. golf courses, about 2,000 are members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary

Program for Golf Courses, which stresses ecologically sound land management and the conservation of natural resources.

Are you experienced?

Michael Quimbey, corporate vice president of environmental affairs for Dallas-based ClubCorp, expects all of his company's superintendents to be well-versed in golf course environmentalism. But Quimbey believes that superintendents should promote the attribute publicly and among peers, especially if they've received awards for their practices.

"It's very important to market," Quimbey says, pointing out that about 80 of ClubCorp's more than 200 courses are members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. "Many times, superintendents don't receive recognition for being environmentalists."

Despite being a sportsman, Davis says he knew little about golf's relationship with the environment be-

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The Green Resume

Human resource consultant Dave St. John offers tips to help environmentally aware superintendents enhance their careers and further their causes:

- **Reinvent yourself as a writer and a speaker** —

Look for opportunities to write articles and speak in front of groups about the environment. But don't make the mistake of assuming that either of these is easy to do and that you automatically have the natural ability to do both well. Get some public speaking training and become known as not only informative, but also entertaining in your presentations.

- **Don't forget the Internet** — More and more people are developing their own Web sites. Linking your site to other golf and environmentally oriented sites gives you instant access to thousands of cyber surfers who may have similar interests.

- **Become part of the package a member buys** —

Environmental issues face virtually every type of industry today, and these industries may be represented by many of your club members.

Enlightened industry leaders are always looking for solutions to problems they are facing even when they are playing golf. Look for ways to integrate the work you are doing into the club's communication processes.

- **Don't forget the community surrounding your golf course** —

Being a good environmental neighbor is valuable long-term insurance for any organization. Sometimes the resources and methods used by a golf course to more effectively deal with environmental issues are beyond the scope of the surrounding community. Opening lines of communication and information sharing with them can put both you and your club in a unique and positive light with your neighbors whether they play golf or not.

- **Know your stuff, but stay objective** — Environmental issues are passion for some and pain for others. For every person who has statistics and tales on one side of the issue, there are people with contradictory information supporting their views as well. The result can be a shouting match in which little is accomplished. The environment is a subject that needs its case made by solid, supported and researched facts presented ably by a cool, objective and informed person.

- **Understand the difference between conversions and careers** —

From time to time, you are going to run into people who disagree with your views on the environment and what you are trying to achieve. These folks may hold your future and your career in their hands. The environmentally passionate superintendent may try to spend an inordinate amount of career-wasting efforts trying to convert these folks. The smart ones move on and go where they will be wanted, utilized and appreciated.

- **Teach, don't preach** —

If the environment is your passion, then accept the fact that you will know a great deal more about it than others. But remember that knowledge is power, and power can be used as an instrument of learning or it can be used to overwhelm people with your point of view. Guess which one works better?

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fore he joined Olde Florida in 1992. But knowing that the Rees Jones-designed course was designed with environmental preservation in mind, Davis sought to educate himself extensively. He credits Naples superintendents Tim Hiers (CGCS at Collier's Reserve CC) and Gary Grigg (CGCS at Royal Poinciana GC) for their sound advice.

Key to Davis' success is his motivation to enlighten himself and others that golf courses can have a positive impact on the environment. Davis often takes that message to schools, where his philosophy is that today's students could be tomorrow's EPA officials and government legislators.

"My increased knowledge of the environment and golf has enabled me to speak intelligently to our course's members and the general public," Davis says. "My employer looks at me as more than just a grass grower."

So do other employers. Davis says he has turned down several job offers, including one from an unnamed golf course on the East Coast that would have doubled his salary.

"Most everyone is driven by money," Davis says, "but the No. 1 aspect I look at in a job is appreciation. And if I'm appreciated, I'll probably be financially rewarded."

Like Davis, CGCS Charlie Passios is a more marketable superintendent because of his environmental proficiency and his willingness to put that know-how into action. Passios was recruited by Siasconset, Mass.-based Nantucket GC in 1996 to be its golf course manager. The money is good, says Passios, who previously worked as golf course manager at the Hyannisport Club in Hyannisport, Mass. But he took the job mainly because it's a great gig. The club opened last year and was rated best new private golf course by *Golf Digest* magazine.

Passios was also intrigued by the environmental challenges the course presented. The people of Nantucket rely on one water supply, and Passios knew that the island's lawmakers imposed strict regulations to protect that water.

A reason that Passios got the job is because he's an expert in water quality issues. Back in the mid-1980s at Hyannisport, Passios was heavily involved in the "Cape Cod Study," an EPA-sponsored research project that refuted claims by special interest groups that pesticides and chemicals applied to golf courses were contaminating the water supply.

Passios was instrumental in the construction of Nantucket from the outset. He talks excitably about an endangered species program for rare plants and another project to protect coastal grasslands. "There's more here

than most superintendents will ever experience in their careers," Passios says with pride.

Ted Horton can also make that claim. He has one of the great jobs in golf — vice president of resource management at Pebble Beach Co. — and is regarded as a consummate environmentalist. Like Passios, Horton had an excellent resume to help him get the job.

"I'm absolutely enthralled with the properties we're maintaining," he says.

Horton's prior experience — 14 years at Mamaroneck, N.Y.-based Winged Foot GC and 12 years at Rye, N.Y.-based Westchester CC — helped lead to his appointment at Pebble Beach, where he has worked for nearly seven years. While at Westchester, Horton took an environmental approach by instituting the club's first recycling program and organizing area green industry leaders to meet with the county's drought emergency task force to develop a water usage program during dry spells. Horton also convinced Westchester CC officials to install reservoirs and a pumping station to become independent of the municipal water supply.

Horton enjoys working on the magnificent Pacific Coast near Monterey, Calif., but he didn't take the job at Pebble Beach for the view — or the prestige or the money. They were all determining factors, but the main reason that Horton and his wife went West is so they could be near their son, who lives in Los Angeles.

Cashing in, sleeping in

Former superintendent Tom Stone admits that money was the "driving force" for him to form a consulting firm, NaturGolf, in 1996. Stone saw a niche market and a lucrative opportunity. "But my work has become an obsession," he says. "I love what I'm doing."

Jeff Carlson won GCSAA's 1998 Environmental Steward Award for public courses while he was superintendent at Widow's Walk GC in Scituate, Mass. Today, Carlson is the president of Wild Side Golf Management & Consulting in North Eastham, Mass. "I never thought consulting would be as interesting and lucrative as it is," Carlson says. "And I don't miss getting up at 4 a.m."

Carlson and Stone are two of many eco-golf experts who are taking their shows on the road.

"I love going to the different golf courses," Carlson says. "The industry is rapidly changing in regard to the environment. It's a whole new industry out there."

With NaturGolf, Stone saw an opportunity to assist superintendents in preparing their courses for certification by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. "So many times I've heard superintendents say that they have the resources and can do all the work

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JEFF CARLSON

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Embracing the Environment



CHARLIE PASSIOS

"It's a great job. There's more here than most superintendents will experience in their careers."

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— but that they need help with the plans," he notes.

Stone says water management is another area where superintendents, especially in Florida, need assistance. He says Florida is running short on water, and golf courses there will soon have to cut back their usage. He says he can help them determine watering priorities and water-quality management planning.

Davis has also found time to consult, as well as write articles and narrate videos on golf and the environment. "Environmentalism is a selling tool," he says in reference to securing the extra work.

But superintendents had better be well-informed in the subject if they're trying to market themselves as environmental authorities to move up in their careers. Passios warns that superintendents who are winging it will get burned in the end. He says some superintendents who claim they are environmental authorities often end up misrepresenting and embarrassing themselves.

"They leave themselves exposed and it backfires on them," he says.

Nancy Sadlon, executive director of the Alliance for Environmental Concerns, says superintendents need to keep abreast of regional environmental issues if they want to be authorities. "Different regions have different hot spots," she adds.

Environmental consulting is the rage, but Carlson is not worried that the field will become crowded with pretenders. "If you have a passion about what you do and you work hard and do a good job, you'll find plenty of work."

While they are recognized for their environmental convictions, Carlson and the others are realists. Their slogan is not "organic or bust."

"I'm not on a kick to eliminate pesticides," Davis says, stressing that a superintendent's No. 1 duty is "growing great grass" to appease a course's customers. "Pesticides are safe and effective when applied according to label directions."

Passios is irked at environmentally fervent superintendents who declare that all-organic is the only approach to turfgrass management, yet their golf courses

Doing the Right Thing

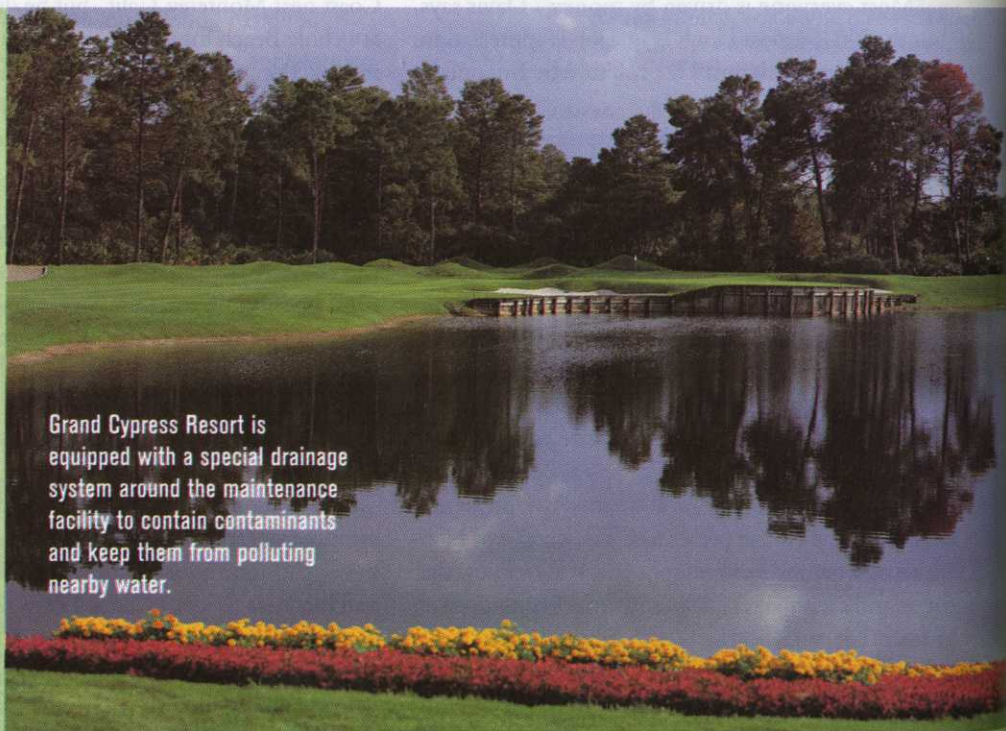
By Larry Aylward

They say that Tom Alex runs a model maintenance facility when it comes to environmental awareness. Alex appreciates the plaudit, but the director of golf course maintenance at Orlando's Grand Cypress Resort didn't become an environmentalist to earn praise from his peers.

"It's the right thing to do," Alex says humbly when asked about his tidy reputation. "I have two children, I live on a lake, and I'm an outdoorsman. I'm genuinely concerned about the environment."

Alex says he has always been on nature's side, but a few incidents that happened several years ago spurred him to take golf course environmentalism to a level that might even make Rachel Carson proud.

In 1988, a representative from Florida's Department of Agricultural Services stopped by Grand Cypress for an inspection and discovered fungicide residue in soil that was off limits to chem-



Grand Cypress Resort is equipped with a special drainage system around the maintenance facility to contain contaminants and keep them from polluting nearby water.

icals. Alex was angry. He knew a strong rain could have washed the residue into a nearby creek.

"The residue shouldn't have been there," Alex maintains, explaining that a worker had mistakenly discarded the fungicide from a sprayer.

The other incident occurred in 1991 when Grand Cypress spent nearly \$100,000 to repair

underground storage tanks that were leaking diesel fuel. "We took out about 2,000 tons of contaminated material," Alex says.

Both mishaps were accidents, but that didn't stop Alex from stepping up his environmental approach through education and action. As part of the process, Alex constructed a drainage system

resemble unkempt city parks. "That's selling the wrong picture," he adds.

Onward, upward

Carlson, 50, eventually wants to leverage his experience and environmental knowledge into owning a golf course similar to Widow's Walk, regarded as the nation's first environmental demonstration project.

Carlson attempted to purchase Widow's Walk earlier this year but was underbid by a local management company. "It was disappointing, but such things happen for a reason. I've kept busy with the consulting, and I've worked on some good projects," he says.

Forty-one-year-old Passios, 42-year-old Stone and 55-year-old Horton say they are content in their current positions. But that doesn't mean they're not thinking about the future.

"Do you have a crystal ball?" Passios asks.

Quimbey's goal is to keep quality superintendents who are environmentally informed from leaving for other jobs. The key is to show them your appreciation,

says Quimbey, adding that the average stay of superintendents at ClubCorp courses has been about 17 years since the company began 42 years ago.

"If I received recognition and credit for my contributions, I wouldn't want to leave," Quimbey says.

Davis knows that feeling, but he still believes he owes it to himself to re-evaluate his career goals. The 32-year-old has been at Olde Florida for seven years in his first stint as a superintendent and is regarded as one of golf's top young superintendents.

And because he's passionate and knowing about the environment, he's as marketable as Star Wars movie merchandise.

"If you're up to date on the environment, you become a more desirable employee," Davis says. ■

It ain't easy being green but it's worth the pain, says columnist Joel Jackson. See page 40.

Golf has experienced an improbable green conversion, says publisher/editor Pat Jones. See page 46



TED HORTON

"I'm absolutely enthralled with the properties we're maintaining."

to negate the possible contamination of nearby streams and wetlands with fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals. The objective of the drainage system is to contain and collect, Alex says.

A closed loop

It's a sunny, cool Florida morning and Alex is conducting a tour of the maintenance facility. He points to a drain located at a pesticide tank filling station and explains that any chemicals spilled during loading will drain into a sump and can be pumped back out and into the tank.

Standing inside the repair shop, he points to another drain bordering the building's open front. He explains that all solvents and oil that drip from repaired equipment are washed into the drain and circulated to an oil-water separator.

A drain in the lapping pad area performs the same function. So does the drain at the cleaning station, where nearly 60 workers wash and wax mowers and other equipment at the end of a working day. The waste water flows through three screens to capture grass clippings and other debris before being pumped.

Alex adds chemicals to the separator to dissolve oil. The water from the separator flows to a sewage treatment plant about a mile away, and is later used to irrigate the course.

"It's all underground piping, and it's a closed

loop," Alex says of the drainage system that he installed with the help of employees skilled in concrete, metal and electrical work. Because he didn't have to hire outside help, construction expenses didn't break the maintenance department's budget, Alex says.

Recycling of tires, batteries, oil filters and chemical drums is also part of Alex's environmental program. "A lot of it is common sense," Alex says. "You don't chuck batteries and oil filters. You don't dump waste oil."

But a lot is based on sound management. For instance, there's the daily mower check when mechanics inspect bed knives and reels. If they can't cut paper, the bed knives must be faced before the mowers are allowed back out on the course. Also, all fast-moving mower parts are replaced every five years. The bottom line: Well-maintained equipment is easy on the environment, Alex believes.

Finding a way

Education, perhaps, is the key to Alex's environmental program. Alex, who has worked in the industry for more than 20 years, recalls the 1970s when heavy-metal pesticides were to golf courses as disco was to dance bars. "We used a lot of it," Alex says of the hazardous chemical. "It wasn't cool, but we didn't know that then."

Most superintendents weren't thinking about

the impact that such chemicals might have on golf courses in 20 years. But today, the future is top of the mind for Alex. "We're looking at the long haul. And if you do that, the environmental side of golf management is a natural fit"

Alex is content with his maintenance facility, even proud. He has given tours to his peers who are interested in adopting similar programs. But he understands that many golf courses don't have the money to overhaul their maintenance facilities. His advice to them is to do like he did: move slowly and implement one corrective step at a time.

Which brings Alex to his last incomplete environmental task. Flies buzz his head when he nears a reeking dumpster packed with decaying grass clippings. He can bear the stink, but he's bothered when nitrates drain out of the dumpster with water after a hard rain.

Alex says it would take four full-time employees and new equipment to implement a grass clipping recycling program. While he's an environmentalist, Alex admits he sometimes has to take off that hat and look at the big picture.

"It's still a lot less expensive to put the grass clippings in a dumpster and have them hauled away," he says, thinking like a businessman.

But he vows to rectify the situation. "It's the last thing I've got to clean up," he says.

He knows it would be the right thing to do. ■