

# Squaring Off on PDI

To supplement our primary Pro and Con editorials, *Golfdom* asked other superintendents around the country to give us their thoughts on some key questions about PDI. Those responses follow:

## PDI in a Nutshell

Here is a thumbnail sketch of the complex proposal known as PDI. Note that several aspects of PDI impact member classification and will require changes in the GCSAA bylaws. The bylaws vote is scheduled for the 2001 Annual Meeting in Dallas.

- The stated purpose of PDI is to "improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the professional superintendent." The goals include increased salaries, better job security, recognition, opportunities and "branded" credentials that can be sold to employers. (Source: GCSAA)

- PDI would require new Class A and CGCS members to have a two-year turf degree or four-year degree in any subject. Requires member approval of a bylaws change.

- All current Class A members who don't meet the degree criteria would be "grandfathered" to retain their status.

- Class A members would have to complete a self-assessment every three years to develop a "competency profile" to ensure they meet a minimum standard of qualification and to map out educational and career needs. Also requires bylaws change.

- GCSAA will establish the HR Web, a database of the competency assessments, to help superintendents manage their careers and (optionally) participate in employment searches.

Attendees in New Orleans will have their chance to learn more about PDI and voice an opinion at the Town Hall Meeting following the GCSAA elections, 10:30 a.m. (time approximate), Saturday, Feb. 17.

Otherwise, visit [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org) or contact the association at 800-472-7878 for more information on PDI.

## Keith Ihms, CGCS

BENT TREE CC, DALLAS

### *Why do you think PDI is being proposed?*

This program was initially proposed to enhance the professional image of superintendents, as well as increase the marketability of Class A superintendents to potential employers. As a side benefit, PDI has also given GCSAA an opportunity to review our educational programs, from content to instructors, and make improvements as needed.

### *Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?*

I support the concept, but until all details have been worked through, I can't comment on any possible revisions at this time. There is still much work and discussion to be done.

### *Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?*

The key ingredient to the program's success centers on the competency-based Performance Assessment Models. These may be difficult to complete and agree upon. In addition, some type of validation system will need to be developed which has some backbone and is workable.

### *If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?*

It will increase superintendents' status in the golf business, make branded Class A superintendents more marketable and increase the compensation of qualified superintendents.

### *If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?*

GCSAA will become an even more recognized player in golf than it is

today. Anyone who wishes to be involved in golf course management as a career will want and need to be a Class A member of GCSAA. And even more important, no golfing facility will want to be managed by anyone other than a GCSAA Class A superintendent.

## Sean A. Hoolehan, CGCS

WILDHORSE RESORT GC,  
PENDLETON, ORE.

### *Why do you think PDI is being proposed?*

The PDI came out of the desire to create standards for superintendents. It seemed to spin out of discussions held at chapter delegates meetings. There always seemed to be some dissatisfaction that the majority of Class A superintendents attend classes, go to conferences and stay up on new developments while a guy at a nine-hole par-3 course for three years could simply pay \$250 and, voila, he is also a Class A superintendent.

### *Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?*

I support it with revisions. I support it because it reflects what the majority of superintendents already do. I don't like the self-assessments or competency tests. This is not necessary for minimum standards and would fit better in the certification program. Class A members already are getting a formal education and getting continuing education. We give them a verifiable credential with no added cost.

### *Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?*

At first, it appears to be the degree re-

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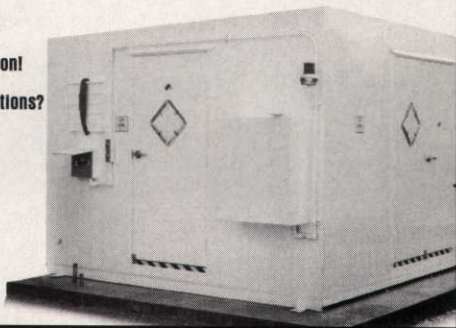
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quirement. How do you compare turf programs? Requirements are too stiff for some and not hard enough for others. Eventually, it is going to be the competency tests and the self-evaluations (that are most problematic). How are they going to be used and how do you keep people from cheating? Also, the tracking of these and the security issues could be the most expensive part of PDI.

### ***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?***

It will raise the value of Class A membership. More courses will have GCSAA Class A members. The course that doesn't have a superintendent with minimum qualifications will be questioned.

### ***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?***

More growth, more cost and a membership held in higher esteem.

## **Kerry Satterwhite, CGCS**

MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR OF GC MAINTENANCE;  
BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

### ***Why do you think PDI is being proposed?***

We have seen an evolution of superintendents over the past 15 to 20 years, but the public perception has not changed. We are struggling not only for identity, but for recognition for our accomplishments. Our responsibilities have become increasingly diversified, as have the many day-to-day issues we deal with. Many of us are still viewed as "grass cutters" when we have become so much more. For us to be recognized as more, we had to launch an initiative that would help us achieve that.

### ***Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?***

I would have to say that I support it as is. I have some concerns about how it will affect ALL of the members of GCSAA, but its positives far outweigh its negatives. What has to be taken into consideration is what is best for the majority of the association now and in the future. The proposal is in the long-term best interests of most of the association members. I favor stricter standards. It should be more difficult to become certified and maintain your certification status. In fact, a level above CGCS should be created.

### ***Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?***

The provision that has created the most controversy is the (degree) requirement and how that will impact the classification system. This profession has always provided the opportunity

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## OTHER VOICES

The goals of PDI are great – more money, job security, etc. However, I don't see how PDI will cause these things to happen. It's up to the individual to advance. If the superintendent does a good job, pay and security will come. When the majority find out about this, it will be defeated.

**Max Bowden, CGCS**  
Cleveland CC; Shelby, NC

The competency profile – this is being sold as a tool the superintendent can use to objectively measure personal strengths and weaknesses, allowing him or her to seek appropriate educational seminars. This sounds a lot like the original purpose of the Stimpmeter. It was supposed to be a tool the superintendent could use to objectively measure the speed of putting greens and to gauge their consistency.

But look at what the Stimpmeter did for our business. Now we're going to create a tool that will allow the superintendent to be measured? This is potentially very dangerous. All it would take is one ambitious candidate, trying to gain an edge at a job interview, to pass around his or her competency profile and soon other applicants would have to produce their own.

**Mike Rewinski**  
Westhampton CC; West Hampton Beach, N.Y.

It's time to raise the standards for Class A membership in GCSAA. What those standards will be is what the PDI process is about.

**Gary Grigg, CGCS**  
Royal Poinciana GC; Naples, Fla.

HR Web really bothers me. There is no way that this tool can do anything but leave the members that manage low-budget and mom-and-pop courses behind in favor of those with big budgets and numerous assistants. This (competency profile) is supposed to be private information, but anyone with an open mind can imagine that GCSAA or selected headhunter firms operated by prominent association members will use this tool as a job placement system. In the future, GCSAA will represent only upscale private clubs, resorts and multi-course municipalities. Will the member-

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nity for someone without a formal education to become successful. That opportunity will not be taken away. You can still belong to the GCSAA, and everyone will have the same opportunities. It's up to individuals to make career choices that benefit them.

***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?***

We will continue to gain the respect and recognition that we deserve. Many superintendents have already achieved that, but that consists of a minority of the GCSAA membership.

You will see career assistants and irrigation technicians. Not everyone who enters this profession is cut out to be a superintendent. As we enter this new millennium and we deal with more regulatory issues and personnel management becomes more critical, you will see the superintendent's responsibility shift away from "turf management" and focus more on other responsibilities.

***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?***

Initially, there will be some attrition. That is unfortunate because some members will drop out as a matter of principle. However, after the growing pains have subsided, you will see membership continue to grow. There will be more educational opportunities for everyone.

**Ted Cox, CGCS**

RUNNING FOX GC;  
CHILLICOTHE, OHIO

***Why do you think PDI is being proposed?***

There is a feeling by some superintendents that the office superintendents want to separate themselves from the dirty-fingernailed superintendents, and this is what PDI is about. I agree with that view, though I also feel there's an honest effort toward making the education better.

***Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?***

I don't support PDI as written. I would agree to PDI with some revisions. But you must keep in mind that it is not written. We have been told time and again that it is not set in stone, which makes forming an opinion difficult. I'm 100 percent against the degree requirement in any form.

***Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?***

The degree requirement and the HR Web.

***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?***

There will be a large distinction between club superintendents and public superintendents. Top superintendents will effectively lock out anyone else from the top jobs. The image of a superintendent will have two faces — one will be suit-and-tie elitist' the other will be Joe Slob wearing jeans and not knowing which end of a sprayer to use.

***If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?***

The membership will suffer. It won't be able to reach the 45 percent of superintendents who aren't members now, and GCSAA may lose many members. GCSAA might get some competition from another association.

**Rick Niemier**

CLASS A; MARION, IOWA

***Why do you think the PDI is being proposed?***

What the Membership Standards Resource Group is saying is that GCSAA needs minimum standards to be able to promote superintendents to employers, and the three years of being employed as a superintendent is too little. Most people who become superintendents work at least five years in the business before they become a superintendent. Some who are already Class A and CGCS want to make it harder to become a Class A. They feel it's too easy to reach Class A status.

The GCSAA is a very political association, and those involved generally do not

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ship drop? At first, probably yes, but with the mass influx of turf school graduates, it will probably level off. I can't believe it will grow at the previous rate. And the 50 percent of all superintendents who do not belong now will never join.

**Corey Eastwood**  
Stockton G&CC; Stockton, Calif.

In time, PDI will make all of us better superintendents. It will enhance our education and make it specific to our needs. We will be better recognized by employers and golfers. You will see superintendents who are the most educated and highly respected become members of the management team.

**Ross O'Fee, CGCS**  
The Country Club; Park City, Utah

I support PDI as it's written. It would be shortsighted to think it's a static program. It will evolve as need arises. There has been a tremendous amount of thought put into it, but that doesn't mean it's perfect.

**Tom Schlick, CGCS**  
Marriott Golf, Orlando

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oppose programs like this because of potential backlash. Many of us who have spoken out against PDI have been attacked personally and professionally. A superintendent told me he defended me to the "powers to be." Did I need defending? I voiced my opinion. Supposedly, this is what the MSRG wanted.

**Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?**

I don't support it as written and changes need to be made before I will lend my support. The education requirement (degree for future Class A) needs to be dropped. The proficiency profiles need to be thought out more. Many potential problems exist when this information could be released.

**Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?**

The degree requirement to attain Class A, required proficiency profiles and the fact that many things such as cost, number of continuing education credits and professional development units, and grandfathering have not been finalized.

**If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?**

It will have forced many lower-budget superintendents to drop their GCSAA memberships. With the dual membership requirement that passed a few years ago, they will also not be able to join their local associations. The result: more superintendents with few educational opportunities.

**If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?**

GCSAA will represent higher-end clubs, but most lower- and middle-budget courses will not be represented. These lower- and mid-budget superintendents will have no voice. ■

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