

**W**ith Valentine's Day just ahead — or just behind depending on the vagaries of the U.S. mail these days — I thought I'd drop a little love note to the golf course industry. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways:

♥ I love the way superintendents always seem relaxed and laid back even though they have stressful jobs that demand a fierce, anal-retentive desire to achieve an often unachievable level of perfection.

♥ I love the game of golf itself, but not for some mystical, highfallutin' "Golf-In-The-Kingdom"-ish reason. For me, golf rules all other games because you can drink, smoke, gamble and even heed nature's call behind a tree (sorry ladies) while meandering around a superbly crafted landscape. What's not to love about that?

♥ I love the fact that this \$8.4 billion business seems more like a small family than a huge marketplace.

♥ I love poking around in maintenance facilities and asking dumb questions ("What the hell is this thing?"). I'm amazed at how patient you are with non-turfheads like me. I would have smacked me upside the head years ago.

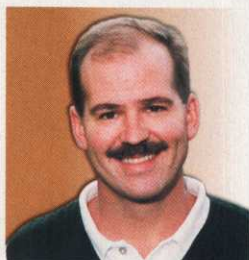
♥ I love the fact that we received a bunch of letters from spouses and children of superintendents after we ran a story on balancing careers and families. It reaffirms that this is a special job that requires the family to work as a team to survive.

♥ I love that there are still young people coming into the industry with talent, high hopes and the humility to realize that they don't know it all. Despite rumors to the contrary, the concept of apprenticeship and paying your dues is alive and well — at least among the younger folks who will eventually be truly successful in the business.

♥ I love driving past my local Cleveland Metroparks muni course on the way to work and seeing four African-American elementary school kids waiting on the tee, drivers in hand, with big smiles on their faces and visions of Tiger dancing in their heads.

## How Do I Love Thee, Industry?

BY PAT JONES



IN HONOR OF  
VALENTINE'S DAY,  
HERE'S A LITTLE  
LOVE NOTE TO THE  
INDUSTRY

♥ I love it when I meet somebody for the first time and I tell them I publish a magazine for the people who maintain and manage the most beautiful and coolest playing fields in the world. I can't tell you how many millionaire executive types have said that they would trade me jobs in a heartbeat.

♥ I love it when I occasionally come across a Tour pro, like Ben Crenshaw, Pete Jacobsen or Mark McCumber, who really gets what you do. Perhaps the only upside of the celebrity-player design craze is that superstars like these are increasingly appreciative of the crucial role superintendents play in the success of their creations.

♥ I love the constant innovation of superintendents and the suppliers who serve them. Isn't it both astounding and amusing how many techniques and gadgets they've created to facilitate the damnably simple idea of propelling a small white ball into a tiny hole in the distance? Old Tom is almost certainly laughing his arse off in his Scottish grave — but I bet he's jealous, too.

♥ I love the earlier-than-usual scheduling of the GCSAA Show this year. Why? Because for the first time in years, I'll be able to give my beautiful wife candy and flowers in person this Valentine's Day.

♥ I love standing on the first tee of a course I've never played. It always makes me feel like a kid who's about to unwrap the biggest present under the Christmas tree.

♥ Last, but not least, I love the fact that I get paid to do something I love. I hope you do, too.

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