

# Moving Ahead

Change is the only constant in the lives of *Golfdom's* millennium kids

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.,  
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**T**wo years ago, *Golfdom* chose five students who graduated in 2000 to follow as they progressed in the profession. Each of them started their careers with dreams and expectations.

In 2001, some experienced rapid change. To a man, however, they look forward to see what 2002 has in store. Here are their stories:

## Ross Pudenz (24, Iowa State University)

When a Minnesota-based management company purchased the Wild Ridge/Mill Run golf complex where he worked, Pudenz, an assistant superintendent, heard

rumors of changes, but he wasn't worried. The new owners assured him there would not only be a place for him in the new organization, but a promotion might also be in store.

"I didn't really let myself get too interested in the idea of becoming a superintendent with the new company until management started talking about it in concrete terms," Pudenz says. "Whenever you have someone purchase your course, rumors always circulate."

At press time, the new owners told Pudenz he would become the superintendent of St. Croix National GC in Somerset, Wis. Pudenz says he's looking forward to his first superintendent post. One of his first priorities is to create a safety program.

"Safety is a big issue for me," Pudenz says. "There's more to life than tending to a golf course, and if you're not safe on the golf course, you won't be able to live your life off it."

Pudenz sometimes has to pinch himself to make sure he's not dreaming. Last year, he told *Golfdom* he planned to leave Mill Run to pursue a head superintendent position. Then came the purchase — and the opportunity to follow his dream without completely abandoning the course that has been his home for two years.

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"I'm excited about being able to remain in the same company as my friends," Pudenz says. "It will make leaving a little easier."

Pudenz also experienced change in his personal life. He now has a steady girlfriend named Hannah, who he met when she worked in Mill Run's pro shop. Are wedding bells in the offing? Pudenz isn't saying for sure, but stay tuned.

## **Steve Richau**

**(30, Lake City Community College)**

Richau believes he may finally have found a steady job. At this time last year,



Richau worked at Stoneycreek at Wintergreen Resort in Wintergreen, Va., his second course since graduation. He decided his options for career advancement were limited at Stoneycreek. So he packed up his wife Kim and their (now 22-month old) daughter Sadie and searched for another new job, this time in the golf-rich state of North Carolina.

"I won't lie; the fact that I was changing jobs for the third time in two years came up at several interviews," Richau says. "I know I'm in danger of becoming labeled a 'job hopper,' but John (Adkins) was willing to overlook that, and I'm ready to stay around for a while."

Adkins is superintendent at Tot Hill GC in Asheboro, N.C., and he hired Richau to work for him as an assistant

superintendent. Richau says he has far more responsibilities at Tot Hill than he did previously. This will prepare him well for his next move, which he hopes will be to a superintendent's job near Asheboro. Kim, for one, is ready to settle down.

"She told me she has one more serious move left in her," Richau says. "I'm hoping to stay in this area for a while so I don't have to subject her or Sadie to another move. There are many golf courses in the area, and the opportunities will be available. I'm looking forward to learning all that John can teach so I'm ready when my time comes to move up."

## **John Nachreiner**

**(29, Michigan State University)**

Nachreiner also changed jobs last year. When his contract with Egypt Valley CC in Grand Rapids, Mich., ended in January, Richau worked at the Turf Research center at his alma mater, Michigan State University. While there, he helped remove the artificial turf from the school's football stadium and installed a natural grass field.

"That was a great experience," Nachreiner says. "I'm a big Spartans fan, and it was neat to help them out while I searched for another job in golf course maintenance."

It's not that Nachreiner didn't like Egypt Valley; on the contrary, he says the crew there is extremely talented. At the same time, however, the crew is large, and it was hard for any individual mem-



bers to get enough hands-on experience. He found an assistant's job in April at Orchard Lake CC in Orchard Lake, Mich., which suited him perfectly.

"We have a great crew here, and as second in command I'm responsible for making decisions about what needs to be done and when," Nachreiner says. "We implemented significant changes to the maintenance practices, such as walk-mowing tees and greens, that drew rave reviews from the members."

Nachreiner says he liked the responsibility of doing the scheduling and managing people. He says Orchard Lake also has the advantage of being closer to Detroit, which gives him more choices of free-time recreation than Grand Rapids.

"There's a lot more for me to do on nights and weekends," Nachreiner says. "There's definitely great music, and I love the metropolitan feel."

## **Kevin Tansey**

**(24, State University of New York at Cobleskill)**

Tansey remembers where he was when he first heard the news of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He stood in the clubhouse of the Black Course at Bethpage State Park in Farmingdale, N.Y., where he'd gone for a break shortly after the first plane hit the tower.

"We were hosting a state fundraiser with many businessmen who worked in the city," Tansey says. "They'd paid \$750 per person to play our course and use our facilities, but they left almost immediately after they heard the news. We closed the park at noon for the rest of the day. It made you feel so isolated."

Tansey says the most tangible effect of the attacks is the tightened budget imposed on the course by the state after the Sept. 11 tragedy squeezed the budget. A mandatory hiring freeze will prevent the course from replacing an irrigation technician who left recently.

"It's not going to hurt us too much, but you want to be at full strength going into the U.S. Open in June," Tansey



says. "We're all focused on making sure the course is ready for that."

Ah, yes, the U.S. Open — the one Tansey returned to the Black Course to help host. As the tournament approaches, Tansey says he's getting antsy.

"You keep waiting for it to come," Tansey says. "After a while, however, you're ready to have it come so you can move on. The buzz around here has been intense, and it's only going to become greater the closer we get to June."

Christine, Tansey's wife, will also receive her master's degree in education in June, clearing the way for her to teach in New York state. Once that exciting month is over, Tansey says he'll start looking for his next adventure. He says he'd like to stay in the metropolitan area, which includes New Jersey, Connecticut or New York.

"I like working up here," Tansey says. "People appreciate the work you do more because you have serious golfers in this area. Sometimes, a little recognition of the work you do will go a long way to keeping you satisfied."

### **Andy Thompson** (30, Penn State University)

For the second year in a row, Thompson has eluded *Golfdom's* far-reaching spy network. If you ever want to come in from the cold, Andy, you know where to find us. ■

*Editor's Note: Golfdom will revisit these former students periodically to examine their progress in the industry.*

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