

I'm a huge fan of David Feherty, the CBS golf pundit and *Golf* magazine columnist. He's one of the few TV guys out there that seems to understand that the game is supposed to be fun. I read his book, *A Nasty Bit of Rough*, on a flight recently and laughed so hard and so often that I worried the pilot might TASER me just to shut me up.

I recently also learned that Feherty is one of those rare folks at the top end of the golf media who actually gets it when it comes to superintendents. Here's an excerpt from his *Golfonline.com* Mailbag column in late April in which he's answered questions from readers with his usual wit:

"Just wondering why the guys and gals who keep these golf courses in such great shape week in and week out never get more than a mere word or two during a telecast. Why not interview the superintendent and the assistant for five minutes? They could explain what they do in the weeks leading up to the tournament and how they get the golf course to 'peak' for the event. I'm sure it would help educate everyone, including people like 'grain on the brain' Johnny Miller. Maybe even include an online question and answer session with that week's superintendent. Remember, this game is played on living plants, and the playing fields are scrutinized more than any other sport. — *Dean Tomaselli, McHenry, Ill.*

(Feherty replies:) "Cough it up pal, you're either a sod father, or the son of one, or nephew, or something. You're quite right, though. Superintendents do deserve more credit than they get. I always try to get their names in somewhere, but the whole golf thing tends to get in the way. As for an online Q&A session with the super on a weekly basis, I'm all for it if it takes the place of this one, which is a royal pain in the arse to me."

Feherty, of course, was rightly suspicious of the letter. Tomaselli is superintendent at Cary CC. But his little ruse still had the desired impact, and Feherty's positive words are helpful to the cause.

However, his point that the "whole golf thing tends to get in the way" is informative. It echoes statements I've heard from higher

Dauids Help With Goliath Problem

BY PAT JONES



CHEERS TO THEM
FOR NOT BEING
AFRAID TO GO ON
THE RECORD
RECENTLY IN
SUPPORT OF
THE PROFESSION

ups at *Golf Digest*, NBC and other golf media moguls who essentially say, "Yeah, we realize superintendents are important but our readers/viewers just don't care about that stuff."

It's frustrating that the attitude still persists, but, intuitively, it seems like the industry is making progress on the recognition front. I think it's partly due to the efforts of GCSAA and Jeff Bollig's PR team. But credit is also due to many of the superintendents who host pro events and come into contact with these influential media types. They've done a fine job of representing the profession and planting seeds of change in their minds. In short, decades of pestering may finally be paying off.

Another "David" who seems to get it is putting guru Dave Pelz who also chimed in recently with a helpful comment. Pelz, who arguably ought to know more about the playability of putting greens than just about any nonsuperintendent, said: "If you make every green faster every month over a period of years, you're going to ruin the game for the players that aren't very good. And we need them — they're 99.9 percent of all players."

Bravo, Dave. Every know-it-all green committee member or self-styled amateur agronomist out there ought to be required to memorize that statement. At a time when there are so many barriers to keeping average players active in the game, pressuring the superintendent to produce slicked-up, stressed-out greens beyond the abilities of Joe High-Handicapper just contributes to the problem.

So, cheers to two Davids who weren't afraid to go on the record recently in support of the profession. With more folks like them, maybe the goliath problem of recognition for superintendents can soon be defeated.

Pat Jones can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com.