

# We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

## Mona Is a Great Politician

I wanted to compliment *Golfdom* on "cracking the nut" with the article about Steve Mona — he would make a great politician ("Mona in the Middle," January). Mona's behavior is perilously close to the CEOs of cor-



porate America. If you are unwilling to take responsibility during poor economic times, how can you possibly take any

responsibility for what was done well during good economic times? The debate over how well GCSAA is functioning is not about the mission statement. It's about the philosophy on how to pursue it.

PDI may not be the reason for the money problems, but it is a huge expense to the association at a time when we find ourselves in the red and requiring dues increases. Mona, as with other business leaders, didn't want to believe that the economic boom would end. As a result, he didn't plan accordingly.

Shouldn't the growth that the association experienced during the '90s be attributed to the economy also? The money for too long has been flowing toward the association. In my opinion, the money should flow

back to the local associations to strengthen and unify them. After all, they are the ones fighting the grass-roots battles we face today.

There are no easy answers or solutions, but I think a full and detailed disclosure or audit of the association's finances to the general membership would be a good place to start.

**Rick Slattery**  
Locust Hill CC  
Rochester, N.Y.

## Shack Attack

I want to ask Geoff Shackelford ("Bummer! Golf Now Viewed as Uncool," January) how many times he has been on a snowmobile? Has he ever been to Yellowstone in the winter? He wonders why golf is viewed as elitist. He should examine his own biases and do his homework.

**Jack Handly**  
Sales Representative  
Dow Agrosciences  
Auburn, Calif.

I normally don't take the time to respond to articles I read, but Geoff Shackelford's recent ineffective stab at editorializing the state of golf today (January) prompted me to respond.

His remark regarding "lessons with the course's best sweater

folder" just reconfirms my belief that golf course maintenance staffs have a negative perception of golf professionals, and thus will always build walls between the two.

**Steve Ranney**  
Head Professional  
Quail Hollow CC  
Painesville, Ohio

## Be Careful Out There

As I was reading your November 2002 issue, I noticed a serious safety violation in the photos on page 28. There are workers in deep trenches without side-wall supports. Photo 1 is particularly troubling.

This is not good for worker safety, nor is the lack of attention to safety the message that I believe you would want to send to your readers.

**Karl Guillard**  
Associate Professor of Agronomy  
University of Connecticut  
Storrs, Conn.

## Back off the GCSAA

I've had limited exposure to Pat Jones' dealings with GCSAA, but it seems that he is always exposing the down side of things. His online column ("Digital Flagstick, Nov. 16, 2002) insinuates that the powers that be in the association have no regard for its employees. His statements also project the image of as-

sociation leaders making the decisions without informing the public about how those decisions were made. I don't believe that's the case.

Do you think that these gentlemen and ladies aren't intelligent enough to realize the percentage of current staff that won't move? Do you think they're not intelligent enough to study the cost of living and the cost of doing business in other cities? Do you think that they aren't intelligent enough to realize what effect such a move will have on the association's programs and services they provide? Do you not think that a move would be to a location where there would be people fully capable of taking of the duties and responsibilities that its current staff handles?

Jones says, "I seriously doubt the relocation consultant's findings could possibly capture all the costs in terms of money, people and service a relocation will entail." You clearly have no faith in the abilities of such consultants. I think they have done enough work in their field that they have presented enough information and resources to provide GCSAA with reliable numbers.

Having recently attended the Chapter Delegates meeting, it seems to me they have considered all the necessary factors. Believe me, they have considered the effects it will have on the staff. But they are also intelligent enough to know that there are other factors to consider. One of the primary purposes for the existence of the GCSAA is to promote and improve the stature of the superintendents, on the local level and in the entire golf world. I don't believe there is anything in the association's articles of incorporation or bylaws that says the association exists for the benefit of the staff and employees.

**Brian Holland**  
Superintendent  
Kentucky Dam Village  
State Resort Park  
Gilbertsville, Ky.

*Editor's Note: To read Digital Flagstick twice a month, sign up*  
*Continued on page 8*

## Preaching to the Wrong Choir

I have been a superintendent at the same South Florida club for nearly eight years now. For the past 10 years, I have been reading trade magazines and all I ever read about is how hard we work, how good of a job we're doing, how difficult it is to maintain a golf course to member expectations and finding solutions to everyday problems. The odd thing is that we superintendents know how hard we work, the dedication it takes to produce consistent and quality playing conditions, and the enormous amount of stress we endure. But do the members of our clubs really know or even care what we go through to provide them with

these conditions?

I think we need to stop telling each other how difficult our jobs are in our own publications and write articles in golfer publications instead. Let them know how many weeks or months of preparation go into a PGA event. They see these courses on TV week after week with green speeds of 10, 11 or even better. We need to have reliable sources (i.e. TV commentators) and articles from superintendents that host PGA events to explain how these conditions are achieved and how most superintendents shouldn't try them at home on a regular basis.

I think the GCSAA should find

a way to fund commercials to promote superintendents and their credibility. Golfers need to know how we are promoters of the game and the environment as well. We are fighting for them through our associations to work towards reasonable solutions on water allocations with water agencies and the use of specific pesticides with the EPA. I would think that most of us are well educated, and should be treated as any other professional that has a college degree.

**John A. Morsut**  
Superintendent  
North Palm Beach CC  
President, Treasure Coast GCSA  
Jupiter, Fla.



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for *Golfdom Insider*, an e-newsletter  
put together by the *Golfdom* staff,  
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### 'Sharp' Job

I haven't been associated with American Golf Corp. for nearly three years, but I do feel compelled to respond to the nasty little article by Shane Sharp ("American Golf at the Turn," January).

AGC certainly has its faults and has experienced some hard times in the last three years as the economy tanked, play remained flat or down, and the "one new course per day" lunacy of the National Golf Foundation eventually resulted in significant overbuilding nationwide.

No doubt Sharp's friends have had reason to complain about conditions at AGC courses as the company struggled to reduce costs and remain profitable.

Eventually, they struggled just to remain alive, and now Goldman Sachs is about to dine on the body.

AGC's market is primarily public, daily-fee golf, including a fair amount of high-end public golf, with about 25 percent or 30 percent private clubs in the mix.

Most are not old-money, high-end clubs. AGC accepts all business risk for the owner and operates as if it were the owner, guaranteeing an annual minimum rent for use of his property vs. a percentage of the gross (if that exceeds the minimum rent guarantee). AGC covers all losses with its own cash.

For 25 years, AGC's business model produced much greater profits and growth as it provided affordable golf with better course conditions than its competitors.

However, once the market overbuilt and the economy tanked, AGC was exposed to crushing business risk and suffered losses for three successive years after completing the best year in its history.

When the dust settles, look for AGC's directors of maintenance to be running the golf course maintenance operations under Goldman. With some new financial support, they'll quickly fix the problems Sharp harps on.

**Mike Heacock, Agronomist  
and former American Golf Corp. employee**

### How Could You Forget Him?

I always look forward to reading this publication each month, but I was a little disappointed in December.

There is an article called "A Historic Design." While this was a well-written article and was mostly about Gary Panks, I was curious why the superintendent was never mentioned. They do have one, and he does a great job. He has more to deal with in maintaining the "culturally sensitive" areas than the director of golf operations.

Maybe I am a little worked up over nothing, but I am from the area and a good friend of superintendent Todd Huslig. I respect him and what he does.

**Clay Guck  
Superintendent, Tierra Del Sol CC  
Los Lunas, N.M.**

*Editor's Note: Guck is absolutely right. We certainly should have mentioned Huslig in the article, and we apologize for the oversight.*

**Got something to say? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at [fandorka@advanstar.com](mailto:fandorka@advanstar.com), fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.**

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