

In August, I attended the second round of the PGA Championship at Oak Hill Country Club in Pittsford, N.Y., to research and write a story on the volunteers of Oak Hill's maintenance staff. (The story appears on page 28 of this issue.) It was a talented and hard-working cast of people.

Paul B. Latshaw, Oak Hill's former manager of golf courses and grounds, invited me to Oak Hill to do the story. Latshaw was thankful and proud of the nearly 100 volunteers he recruited to help him. And he wanted them to be recognized for their efforts in a story.

Oak Hill was in outstanding shape for the tournament — a testament to Latshaw, his staff and the volunteers for their hard work in getting the course prepped for the mega-event. And that's never easy, what with pro golfers' and fans' increased expectations for flawless greens, tees and fairways.

Jack Nicklaus noticed the great condition Oak Hill was in. Then he came and swooped Latshaw off to Muirfield Village Golf Club, the dream course Nicklaus built in Ohio about 30 years ago, to be its new superintendent.

"I spoke to several players who were in the PGA field, and to a person, they remarked on the fantastic condition of the golf course at Oak Hill," Nicklaus said. "August is one of the most difficult times of the year for turf management, so to hear such high praises of Oak Hill is a true compliment to Paul's ability."

Latshaw hadn't even had time to come down from the high of hosting his first Major tournament before Jack apparently made him an offer he couldn't refuse. But, hey, that's what this business is all about. Latshaw, one of the top superintendents in the business who led Oak Hill to a No. 10 ranking in the 2003 *Golf Digest* biennial ranking of America's 100 Greatest Courses, deserves his fate.

But let's get back to the volunteers, many whom are no-names in the industry when compared to Latshaw's name. They came to Oak Hill for a week or longer to work their posteriors off. Mainly, they came to help Latshaw, who will be the first to tell you that he couldn't have staged the PGA without them.

May Good Karma Come to Them

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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Make no mistake. Latshaw worked his behind off for nearly five years at Oak Hill with the PGA Championship in his sights. The course needed a lot of work when Latshaw got there in 1999, and he directed the effort to get that work done.

But the volunteers, whose last names include DeCerce, Seibel and Rehr, quietly went back to their normal jobs as superintendents, assistant superintendents and mechanics when the tournament was over. They learned a lot and welcomed the experience of hosting a Major, but there was no fanfare or kudos for them from a guy nicknamed the Golden Bear.

So they should be recognized, and that's why *Golfdom* pursued this story. And the volunteers should be proud of themselves for extending an incredible effort to help a friend and ready a golf course for one of the game's biggest annual affairs.

It's a cool story, one I was honored to cover. All I can say is that the brotherhood component in the golf course maintenance industry is truly inspiring, which the volunteers demonstrated at Oak Hill.

If you believe in karma, the volunteers who helped Latshaw — as well as the volunteers who assist superintendents hosting other tournaments throughout the country — will get their due. And at least one volunteer already has.

Jeff Corcoran, one of Latshaw's top lieutenants on his volunteer team during the PGA, was named to replace Latshaw at Oak Hill. It was a step up for Corcoran, the former superintendent at Weston (Mass.) Golf Club, who also worked as Latshaw's assistant at Oak Hill in the late 1990s.

Here's to more good karma happening for all volunteers.

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