

Jim Nantz of CBS Sports was the keynote speaker at the opening session of the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Diego. It was a happy case of serendipity since Nantz was in town to anchor the broadcast of the Buick Invitational being held at the nearby Torrey Pines Golf Course. It turned out to be an opening session for the ages.

As the program began with the usual ceremonies and awards, I noticed Nantz making notes on his speech. I wondered if the video of the history of the association and the itemized list of contributions and accomplishments of the award winners was shedding new light on his perceptions of the GCSAA and superintendents.

As Nantz began his presentation, it was a folksy, nostalgic trip down memory lane, laced with insider glimpses into his career and sports acquaintances. Naturally, it was weighted heavily with golf personalities, especially considering the audience. He poked fun at his own waning golf skills at the University of Houston and gave everyone the inside scoop on why Freddy Couples, his college roommate, buried his face in Nantz's shoulder in the Butler Cabin at Augusta in 1992 when he won the coveted green jacket at the Masters.

It seems Nantz and Couples had rehearsed the winner's interview years before in their college dorm room as Nantz practiced becoming a broadcaster. Broadcasting became Nantz's career goal after watching roommates Couples and Blaine McCallister, another future PGA Tour player, put his golf game to shame.

The moral of the story was that dreams, whether they change throughout your life or not, can come true. Then Nantz did something extraordinary — he offered to use his celebrity status to make superintendents' dreams of getting more attention from golfers come true.

Nantz opened the door when he admitted to the audience that the media had done a poor job of recognizing the role superintendents play in golf. He said he had been remiss in that area as well, and he promised he would strive to a better job in the future.

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When You Wish Upon a Star

BY JOEL JACKSON



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awhile generic thank you comment at the end of a telecast. Nantz began fulfilling his promise the following Saturday and Sunday with comments on superintendents being the unsung heroes of golf and mentioning the GCSAA was in town. He even had his sidekick, Lanny Wadkins, throwing us bouquets on air. It was sweet.

It dawned on me that while superintendents are often overlooked, we must proceed with this prime-time praise opportunity cautiously. If I compare our roles to film production, we are definitely backstage and off-camera. How many of you can name the set designer, lighting director or cinematographer for *Star Wars* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? A film, like a golf course tournament, is a collaborative effort.

The stars at a tournament are the players and the broadcasters. Mandatory credits roll at the end of a film. We should get real credit on air, but it should remain proportionate. We obviously shouldn't be asking for more credit than the stars of the show.

A way for us to help Nantz to "do a better job" will be for GCSAA's Director of Communications Jeff Bollig to work with host superintendents to spice up the usual course fact sheets with some anecdotes beyond grass types and cutting heights. We can toss in some interesting and maybe even humorous tidbits about what it took to prepare each tournament.

Nantz is good enough that he can work those insider facts into the broadcast and help shine the spotlight on the superintendent in a creative but subtle way. For now, Nantz has miles to go and promises to keep, but it is the beginning of a dream — one that we can all hope will someday become reality.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.