

**P**aul Jett knows what it's like to be New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. Well, sort of.

Jett has never been sacked by a hoard of 300-pound defensive linemen, but the certified superintendent of Pinehurst No. 2 has been besieged by a hoard of reporters in preparation for a major sporting event. Jett's course hosted the U.S. Open in 1996 and hosts the prestigious tournament again later this month. In getting Pinehurst prepped for such an event, Jett, like Brady preparing for the Super Bowl, knows what it's like to field question after question from reporter after reporter. It can be a grind.

"I was a rookie at it [in 1996]," says Jett, who turns 41 in July. "It was pretty overwhelming at times. But it has been easier to deal with this time around."

Jett realizes that part of his job, especially at a high-profile course such as Pinehurst, is dealing effectively with the press. He must treat reporters with dignity, even when fielding the same inane question for the umpteenth time. He can't go Barry Bonds on them.

Even if you're a superintendent at a low-budget municipal course, you never know when the media might come calling. Someone, like me, might be calling you to talk turf. Or maybe one of your town's newspaper reporters calls you to talk the golf business.

My advice to you is to welcome reporters with open arms. Don't be afraid to talk to the media. There's nothing to fear. Most reporters are not trying to deceive you or use you for information.

In fact, there are several good reasons to speak with the media. They include:

- You can obtain positive media attention, which can benefit your course and impress members and golfers. I've had superintendents tell me how impressed members were that they were featured in local newspapers or magazines.

- Being quoted in a magazine or newspaper or being interviewed on TV can be good exposure, which can be good for your career. In fact, the media could make you out to be an "authority" on golf course maintenance and management. Yeah, you have to live up to the title, but what's so bad about that label?

- You can put your profession on the map.

## We, the Media, Are Not Out to Get You

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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Let's face it, a lot of people still think of Carl Spackler and "Caddyshack" when they think of golf course superintendents. I know you're tired of hearing that, but it's true. So when the media comes calling, it's your chance to spread the word about the professionalism of your industry.

► It could be your 15 minutes of fame. In 2001, John Szklinski, superintendent of Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla., was featured in "GQ" magazine, among other publications. Szklinski received the attention because Southern Hills hosted the U.S. Open that year.

Even though you shouldn't be afraid to talk to the media, you should always be careful of what you say. Think of John Rocker, the Atlanta Braves' former closer, whose infamous interview with "Sports Illustrated" several years ago not only made him look like a fool but got him in a heap of trouble.

Remember that a lot of reporters consider everything — even the small talk that comes with the "real" interview — on the record. So if you tell them about that stupid thing you did 10 years ago and got away with it, there's a chance it could end up in print.

It's OK to plead the Fifth if you don't want to answer a question. But you have to remember how playing that card might make you appear. Think of Mark McGwire testifying about steroid use in baseball before Congress recently. Big Mac said little and ended up severely diminishing his rep.

Back to Paul Jett. I've interviewed him several times the past few years. He's good with the media because he knows how to gain a reporter's respect. Jett can be polite, humorous and firm in his answers. He also knows when to keep quiet. Jett is straightforward, which is what dealing with the media is all about.

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