

# A “SHOW” OF

**BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF**

After taking it for a spin, Jim Nicol likes the way it drives. | *Handles well. Smooth ride.* | By the way, Nicol is talking about the Golf Industry Show, not the new Ford F150.

Back in 2005, when the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) merged their annual conferences and trade shows to form the Golf Industry Show (GIS), Nicol, the certified superintendent of Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., said he had to “test drive” the “new” bigger show before deciding if the merger was a good idea. After attending the shows in 2005 and 2006, Nicol says he’s impressed with its performance. He says the show’s increased size and scope hasn’t hindered his personal agenda. He still attends the seminars he wants to attend, visits the same booths he wants to visit and sees the people he wants to see.

“I don’t notice much difference,” Nicol says, when asked to compare the Golf Industry Show to the GCSAA Conference and Show. “It’s big, but it was always big.”

This year, with the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) forsaking its own show to join the event, set for Feb. 19-27 in Anaheim, Calif., the GIS has grown as large as a Chevy Suburban. But Nicol, and others

for that matter, have no problem with the show’s immensity. In fact, they believe the GIS, presented with support from the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA) and the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), signifies a show of strength, so to speak, on behalf of the several segments of the golf industry that have teamed together to stage it, including suppliers.

Club Car is one of a handful of companies that exhibited at the three trade shows staged by the GCSAA, the NGCOA and the CMAA. Mike Read, director of marketing for the Augusta, Ga.-based golf car and utility vehicle manufacturer, says the decision to consolidate the shows makes sense.

“There’s a positive synergy building around the Golf Industry Show,” Read says. “The idea of the key members of a facility’s team being in the same place at the same time to facilitate decision making makes a lot of sense for exhibitors and attendees.”

While terms like “merge” and “consolidate” are thrown about, the fact is the NGCOA and the CMAA have joined the GCSAA’s show. Yeah, they merged all right, but the GCSAA was hosting the biggest party before the merger.

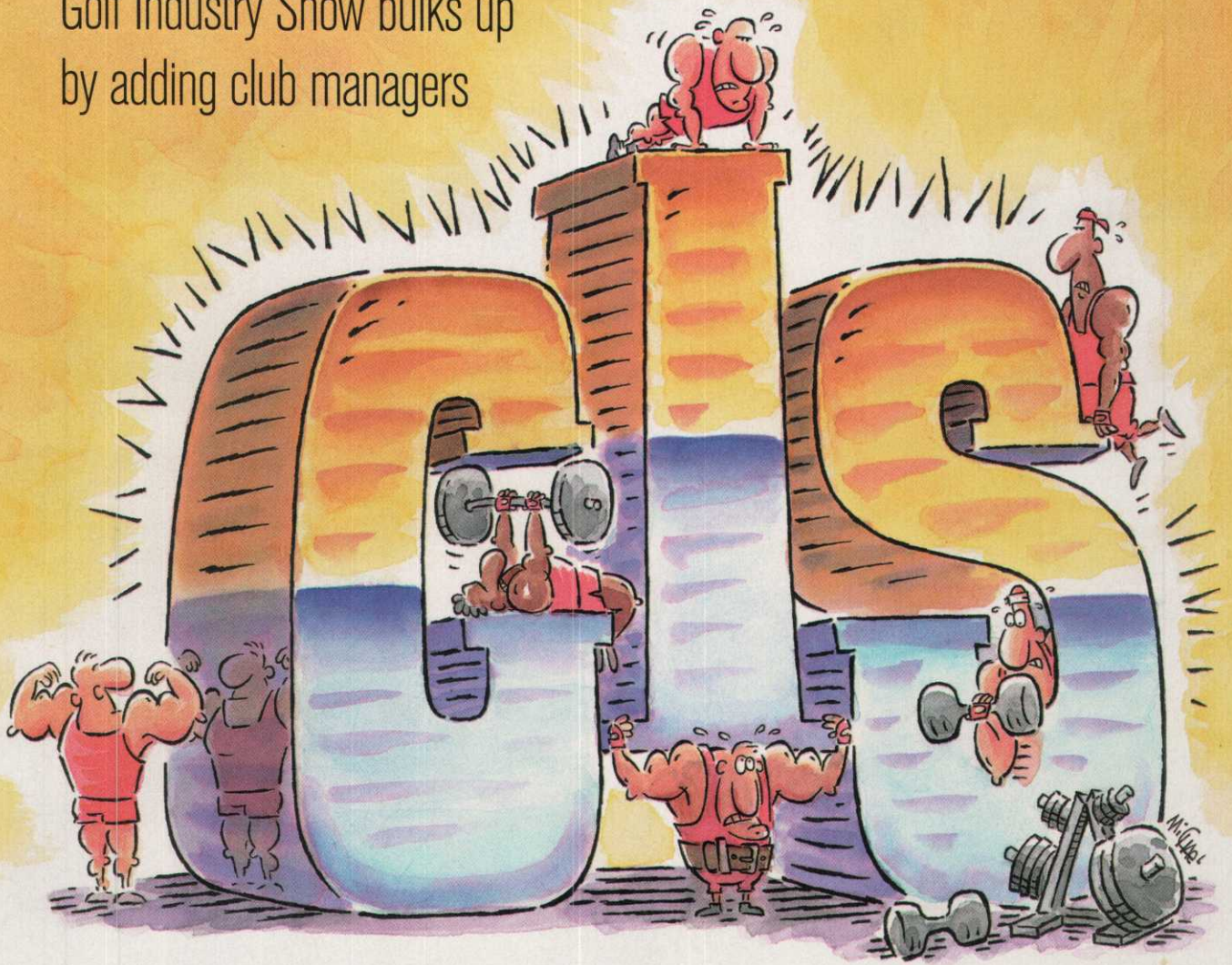
Hence, Nicol and other superintendents were concerned initially that if they had to share their show, it might lose its identity. That might have happened to a small degree, but it’s not like superintendents are lost in the shuffle.

How much bigger will the show be this year? The show floor’s net square feet will be about 298,000 square feet, and about 25,000

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# STRENGTH

The more the mightier,  
attendees say, as the  
Golf Industry Show bulks up  
by adding club managers



## A 'Show' of Strength



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**JIM NICOL** | HAZELTINE  
NATIONAL GOLF CLUB

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attendees are expected. The inaugural GIS in 2005 in Orlando registered 22,723 attendees and had 270,760 net square feet of exhibitor space. Last year, after the show was rescheduled from hurricane-battered New Orleans to Atlanta, the show attracted 18,900 attendees, and the show floor totaled 244,200 square feet. The decreases were expected because the show relocated.

Certified superintendent Kevin Smith, director of golf course maintenance at Bryan Park Golf & Enrichment Center in Browns Summit, N.C., is all for a bigger and stronger show. Smith says he has advocated drawing allied associations together for years. Joint meetings can help improve communication between different groups, he adds, among other things.

There might be growing pains, but they will subside eventually, Smith says. "It will be beneficial for the GCSAA and our allied associations," Smith says. "It will help us become closer and understand our challenges better."

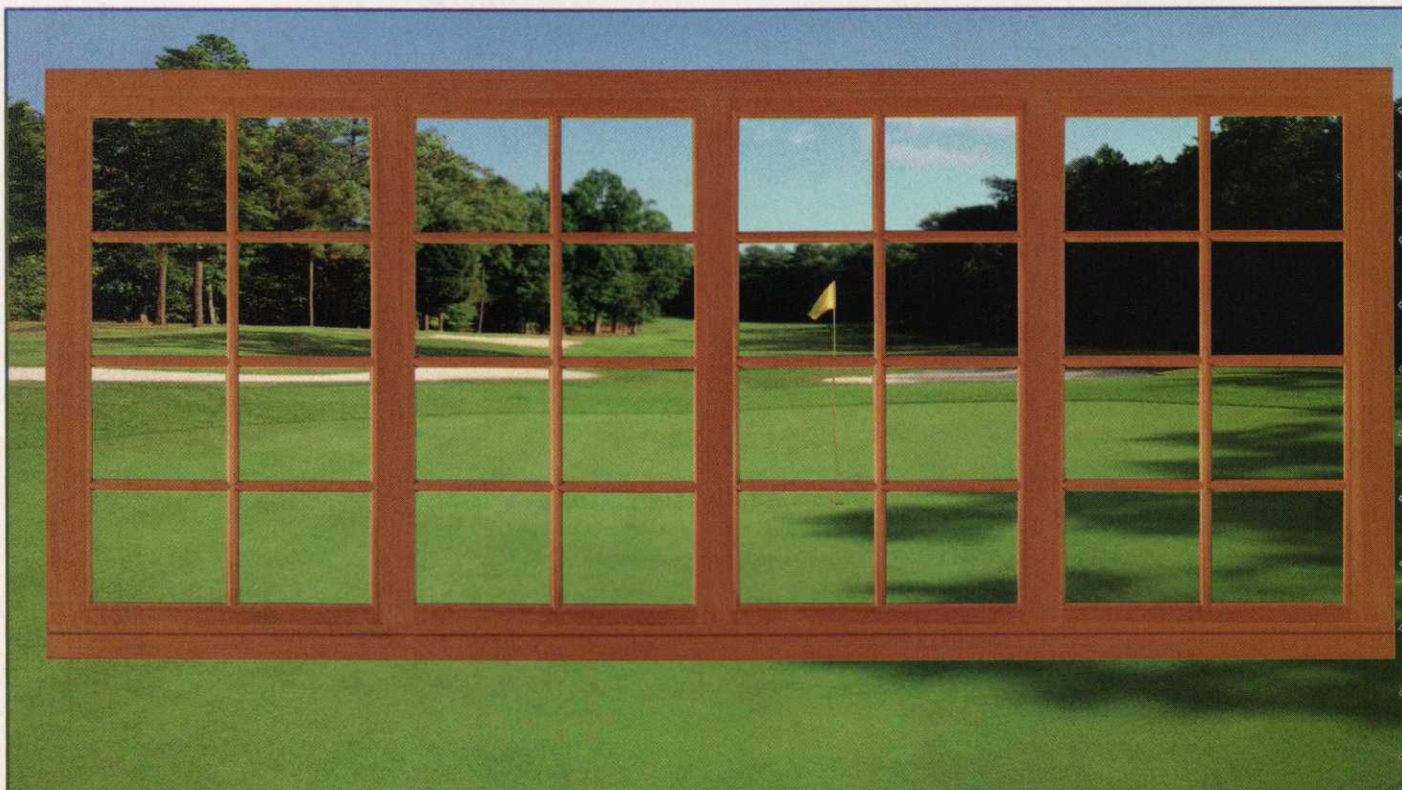
Other superintendents share Smith's sentiments. Tommy Witt, director of golf course operations for Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill., realizes that some superintendents are hesitant about the owners and managers joining their show. "But as sensitive as it is for some superintendents, this can turn out to be a good thing," Witt says.

Todd Voss, superintendent of the Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio, wonders if the show is getting too big, but he likes the new concept. "The show has a lot of upside, like getting everybody together that's on the same team."

GCSAA CEO Steve Mona says many superintendents see the value of having owners and managers join their show. That's because owners and managers can see superintendents in their domain.

"Owners and managers are exposed to the golf course management profession and see how sophisticated it is and how serious our members are about their careers," Mona says.

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## Big Brother Is Watching – Again

Two years ago, when the National Golf Course Owners Association joined the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America to form the inaugural Golf Industry Show, we reported that Big Brother – the “all-powerful” and “forever-watching” character from George Orwell’s novel “1984” – had landed in the golf industry of all places.

It was then, 21 years later, that golf course owners assumed the role of Big Brother. The story went that some superintendents were wary of the NGCOA joining their annual conference and show because they wouldn’t be able to get away with doing some of the things they did at previous shows – like ditching a day’s worth of educational sessions to play 18 holes or party into the wee hours of the morning at their hotel bars – if their courses’ owners were around.

Now with the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) joining the show, Big Brother has reared his ugly head again. Word is some superintendents don’t want the managers attending the show – especially if the managers are the superintendents’

superiors – because they could cramp their lifestyles.

Steve Mona, CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, is aware of the Big Brother theory, but Mona says it’s an “overblown stereotype that’s perpetuated.” Mona says most superintendents want their owners and managers at the show.

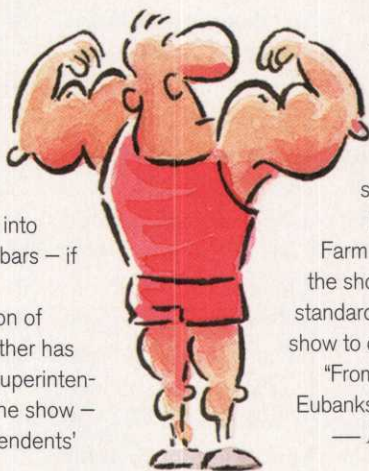
“They want them to see how sophisticated and complex their profession is,” Mona says.

Todd Voss, superintendent of the Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ill., also believes the issue is overplayed. But to the superintendents who do play coy with their managers, Voss adds, “Shame on you if you have to worry about your behavior and someone at the club seeing you.”

Marc Eubanks, general manager of The Olde Farm in Bristol, Va., says superintendents who treat the show as a vacation need to be held to a higher standard. And if it takes their managers to be at the show to do so, so be it.

“From my standpoint as a manager ... that’s fine,” Eubanks says.

— *Larry Aylward*



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"Our identity is still there. It's just that the show is no longer called the GCSAA Conference and Show."

**STEVE MONA** | CEO

GCSAA

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Mona is sensitive to the fact that superintendents don't want to lose the identity of their show. And while the merger was done for the economic health of all three associations and their shows, Mona says each show was unique in its own right, and the leaders from each association want to preserve that.

"They had a sense of community, and we don't want that to be lost," Mona says, noting that the GCSAA has kept intact its educational conferences and major events, such as the president's dinner and the innovative superintendent sessions. "Our identity is still there. It's just that the show is no longer called the GCSAA Conference and Show."

The three associations have mapped out what they think is a solid plan to accommodate show goers. For instance, the GCSAA and the NGCOA will hold their educational sessions early in the week, and the CMAA will hold its educational sessions at the end of the week. All three associations and their attendees will come together for the trade show, set for Feb. 22 through Feb. 24.

The three associations have designated Friday, Feb. 23, as "team day." It begins in the morning with a general session for all three association attendees. Various educational sessions follow and will focus on the team concept. "We're encouraging members of all three organizations to go to the general session together, leave that session together, get out on the trade show floor together and attend some educational sessions together," Mona says.

While the trade-show floor will feature products and equipment from three industry segments, the vendors from each segment will display their products in separate areas on the floor. Hence, Mona says show goers shouldn't get lost.

Mona says he's heard nothing but positive feedback about the CMAA joining the show. People like that a golf club's three key people can now attend the show as a team. But Mona is not so naive to think that every club's superintendent, manager and owner will be inseparable for a week. "I realize that not every not everyone on the show floor is going to be traveling in a pack of three," he says.

The "new" show has raised some concerns

as well. Some wonder if money-conscious golf clubs and courses will send multiple employees — a superintendent, an owner, and a club manager or a general manager — to the same show. For instance, an owner might decide that only he must attend, and the superintendent and manager should stay home.

And is the show floor growing too big for its britches? Strange as it sounds, Nicol hopes the show floor's amplified size doesn't lead companies to trim future booth sizes because they feel lost in the show-floor maze.

That won't happen this year, Mona says, noting that booth sizes among the show's top exhibitors will be larger. Mona notes that companies' booth spaces fluctuate every year, and the reasons for that have nothing to do with the show's size. "Sometimes the way a hall is configured lends itself more to one kind of configuration than another, which causes companies to upsize and downsize their booths," he says.

One thing is for sure: The companies that exhibited at two or three of the former shows are happy with the consolidation. "It will help us save a significant amount of money in exhibit costs, transportation and travel," Club Car's Read says. "It also reduces the amount of time our sales force is out of the field."

While economics played a role in the associations combining their shows, some wonder if the associations will each net enough profit from one big show. But Mona says there will be no cash-flow problems. "We will generate a significantly greater amount of net profit as a combined show with three groups than we did when we were a stand-alone show," he says.

But the "greater amount of net profit" probably won't happen until next year when the show is in Orlando, which always draws more attendees than host cities on the West Coast. It also costs more to stage the show in Anaheim than it does in Orlando, Mona adds. "But there's no question this will be a more profitable show long term for us collectively than any of the three were individually," he says.

So, who's next to join the Golf Industry Show fray? How about the PGA professionals? That would be cool with Nicol.

"If my golf pro was at the show, he'd probably take me out to a nice dinner," Nicol says with a laugh. ■