

# Off The Fringe

## More on 'The Ball Stops Here'

CLEARY CHEMICAL DOES ITS PART TO GROW THE GAME

*Editor's note: Part three of our Growing the Game series, which appeared in August, was titled "The Ball Stops Here" and reported on what the golf course maintenance industry must do to get more engaged in building its own business. We asked our readers to let us know what they're doing to grow the game. We received this response from Mary Ellen Warwick, the president of Cleary Chemical in Somerset N.J.*

My family not only owns Cleary Chemical Corp., but we built and have managed a golf course in Somerset, N.J., for more than 50 years. Since the Tara Greens opened in September 1955, we have offered all of our employees free golf for themselves and their families.

Our course sits on more than 100 acres. We have a nine-hole regulation course, a nine-hole par-3 executive course that's lighted for night play, and a 60-stall-covered driving range with an acre of turf area also lighted for night-time practice. In addition, we have an old-fashioned miniature golf course. We also have three full-time golf pros available for lessons.

Tara Greens is public and is open seven days a week all year. It's the place where many people in central New Jersey learned to play. Tara gives people the opportunity to give golf a try without intimidation. ■

## About Steve Mona ...

WE ASKED READERS HOW THEY WILL REMEMBER THE GCSAA CEO AND WHAT HE DID IN HIS 14 YEARS AT THE ASSOCIATION

**S**teve Mona announced recently that he's moving on to be the new CEO of the World Golf Foundation. Mona celebrates his 14th anniversary as CEO for the GCSAA this month. But the end of the Mona era is coming shortly, probably soon after the Golf Industry Show in January. *Golfdom* asked its readers how they will remember Mona and what they think about some of the things done during his tenure. Here's what some of them had to say:



"Steve Mona is a first-class man. I've been a member of the GCSAA for almost 20 years and the level of recognition that golf course superintendents and this industry gets has been raised dramatically during

Steve's tenure. Not everyone agrees with me, but I think he has operated our national association with one thing on his mind — raising the stature and professionalism of the golf course superintendent. He has hired an amazing group of people to manage the association, who are also very dedicated to superintendents' careers, their advancement and their promotion."

**Steve Hammon**  
Superintendent, Traverse City  
Golf & Country Club  
Traverse City, Mich.

"I feel as though the status of the superintendent has been elevated substantially under Steve's leadership. Our salaries have risen dramatically. I feel as though superintendents no longer stand in the shadows as the silent third party. I'm sure [he faced] some significant criticism from the GCSAA members. But if there wasn't any criticism, then he would have accomplished very little. His shoes will be hard to fill, but he has us rolling, and I am sure we will continue to do so well into the future."

**Matt Shaffer**  
Superintendent, Merion Golf Club  
Merion, Pa.

"I'm probably one of a few affiliated chapter association managers still working (an eternity) who remember GCSAA before Steve Mona. I must say the GCSAA will sorely miss this gentleman. He is, indeed, that and much more."

**Barbara Mikel, Association Manager**  
Golf Course Superintendents Association  
of Northern California

# syngenta Business Tip of the Month

"I think a lot of good things happened under Steve's tenure. I saw the level of member services improve. I saw the whole organization functioning a little better. ... I was a little disappointed with the end product [of the Professional Development Initiative] when it came out. It ended up being watered down. I can satisfy all the requirements of PDI in one year for a five-year cycle. Where is the teeth in that?"

**Bob Marshall**

**Superintendent, Skaneateles Country Club  
Skaneateles, N.Y.**

"Some people weren't Steve Mona fans, and some people were huge Steve Mona fans. I think he's done a great job. The association will definitely miss Mona because he definitely has got it moving into a direction in which the members are happy. ... I don't agree with everything he has done. I don't like PDI. It was dumbed down, and too many people were grandfathered in with it."

**Chris Gray**

**Superintendent, The Marvel Golf Club  
at Kentucky Lake  
Benton, Ky.**

"Steve has been one of those rocks we never thought would falter or leave us. He is the one constant the GCSAA has always had, and probably the reason the association has a legacy of being so professional and personable and conducts itself with class and character. ... Steve is extremely likeable, a marvelous communicator and probably one of the best ad-lib public speakers you will ever hear. He is honorable and honest and believable, rare in today's executive offices."

**James A. Simonini**

**Regional Director of Business Development  
Robert Trent Jones II LLC**

## Rewarding Loyal Customers

**K**nowing how to effectively prioritize and balance your course's financial demands often leads to fewer sleepless nights!

While developing your annual maintenance budget, you must wear your agronomic hat, and you must know how to "sell" your recommendations to your course's owner(s), general manager or greens committee. When increased spending is required on must-have items like pesticides, you have a great opportunity to educate this group on the vital role branded products you trust play in the course's playability and popularity. The bottom line is that success is measured by rounds played, which is often all about the course conditions.

Coming up with a pesticide budget line item amount involves several variables, including such things as a history of pest outbreaks from the past few years. Providing this information in the budget proposal will illustrate historical patterns to justify the expense and help you decide how much money to earmark for controlling each pest.

Of course, any well-planned budget should include contingencies for unexpected problems such as a turf-destroying pythium blight outbreak. It is important to communicate that if no serious pest-related maintenance problems occur in the coming year, the money not spent may be transferred to course or clubhouse improvements.

Not all golf club budget items are created equal. Considering how items like a pesticide can save a course from irreparable damage, it's hard to think of it in the same vein as new furniture. Though clubhouse "creature comforts" are vitally important in making memorable experiences for your members and players, it's up to you to educate financial decision makers on the long-term impact that vital maintenance supplies have on your course's playability and profitability.

*The "Tip of the Month" is provided by Syngenta to support superintendents in their agronomic, business and professional development. To comment on this column, submit a lesson from your own experience, or suggest a topic to be covered in a future issue, please visit [www.golfbusinesstips.com](http://www.golfbusinesstips.com).*

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## Off The Fringe

# Superintendents as Historians

UNEARTHING A CLUB'S PAST CAN LEAD TO A BETTER FUTURE. HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO DO SO **By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor**

Shortly after taking over as superintendent of the Fox Chapel Golf Club just north of Pittsburgh, Jason Hurwitz was cleaning out the maintenance facility. There he found an innocuous Tupperware box that contained an array of plans for the course, the most-prized being a brittle sheet of paper that was repeatedly folded. That paper happened to be the original Seth Raynor drawings for the course that opened in 1924.

More than 500 miles to the east and a few months later, Bill Morton, the superintendent of The Misquamicut Club in Watch Hill, R.I., was digging through the basement of the large stone clubhouse. It has long been known that much of the club's archives were thrown out years ago, but Morton went searching anyway and made two major discoveries: correspondence among members indicating that Raynor redesigned five holes in the spring of 1914, making it some of his earliest work; and information revealing that Walter Travis was commissioned to redesign the original 18-hole Thomas Bendelow course in 1916. Travis drew up and delivered the plans and was paid, but the club never undertook the construction. In 1922, Donald Ross spearheaded a total renovation.

Both cases highlight the role of superintendents as archeologists and historians doing what they can to unearth and preserve history. Delving into the history of a course is a trend that dates back perhaps only 25 years. From the 1940s through the mid 1980s, very few golfers thought about architecture,



never mind preserving it. At the same time, designers focused on "modernizing" courses rather than maintaining and protecting them. Modernization meant the eradication of random hazards, that quirky greens were turned into placid putting sur-

faces, and that hundreds of thousands of unnecessary trees were planted that chocked off angles of play.

Finding out the true history of a course is not always difficult. Here are some tips to do so:

■ Check in the attic and the cellar. As Fox Chapel and Misquamicut reveal, sometimes the past is under your nose.

■ Contact the professional historians. During my research of Highland Links in Truro, Mass., I walked the 300 yards from the pro shop door to the historical society door and uncovered photos, scorecards and history that contradicted the club's own — and wrong — history.

■ Check out local and regional newspapers. Many of the larger publications now have historical archives that can be accessed via the Web, sometimes for free. If not, spend time at the library on some rainy day looking at newspapers on microfilm. It's amazing what a little browsing can unearth.

■ Talk with older members, and see what they remember or might have stashed away. The catalyst for the restoration of Lookout Mountain (Ga.) Golf Club came when the widow of a deceased member was going through his possessions and found the original hand-colored linen plan drawn by Raynor dated Nov. 13, 1925. ■

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# The Thrill of the Grass

THE FIELD OF DREAMS IS JUST WHAT ITS NAME IMPLIES

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

I want to share a recent experience. It's a religious experience if you believe in the church of baseball. And, yes, it has much to do about turf — very sacred turf.

A few months ago I traveled to a place where the sea-green turf is so thick and tough that it's brawny. The turf I'm talking about rivals the rigid rough that Oakmont Country Club displayed for this year's U.S. Open.

The turf I'm talking about makes up the famous baseball field located amid a sprawling ocean of corn in picturesque-in-its-own-right Dyersville, Iowa. That would be the baseball field

that starred in the 1989 movie of its namesake, "Field of Dreams."

Not to sound corny, but visiting the field of dreams was a dream come true for me. I've been a fan of the film for years and have longed to migrate there. There's a line in the film when Kevin Costner's character Ray Kinsella asks Shoeless Joe Jackson (played by Ray Liotta) what he likes about playing baseball. Shoeless Joe responds, "The thrill of the grass." Having seen and played on the field, I can relate.

I bet you didn't know that the field's original sod, which was planted in haste during filming, didn't take and died. Alas, the production crew

The turf was vigorous enough to slow hissing ground balls to a near stop.

had to paint the grass green. However, the field's current grass appeared flawless on the sun-splashed Saturday afternoon I was there.

The field's cornstalks, where the ghost players disappeared after playing, garnered much attention in the movie. But I was more taken with the lush turf, a bluegrass/ryegrass blend that lacked weeds and any sign of disease. The turf was vigorous enough to slow hissing ground balls to a near stop before they reached the red-dirt infield.

During my magical hours spent there, the notion struck me that farmers can tend turfgrass as fine as they can grow corn. The Field of Dreams is proof. ■

PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

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