

The news that recently flooded e-mail inboxes across the golf world dealt with Steve Mona's departure from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. He's leaving after 14 years at the helm to become the new CEO of the World Golf Foundation, which works with the PGA and oversees the World Golf Hall of Fame, Golf 20/20 and The First Tee.

Mona should be congratulated on his new assignment and thanked for a long run as our association CEO. I'm not sure about the turnover for such positions, but a little voice inside my head says that he stayed longer than most association heads. What is the national longevity average for superintendents — seven years?

I don't envy the board of directors as they begin searching for a replacement. Mona took the association to lots of new places, including the Professional Development Initiative, which now means that being a Class A superintendent means more than paying dues. Our organization raised its profile and impact thanks to Mona's involvement in Golf 20/20 and his numerous contacts throughout the golf industry.

When they post the job opening, do you think the board will get 300 resumes like we do at the golf course level? Will they require the new CEO to be a certified association executive like Mona?

Change and progress is not always easy. But Mona set a standard for behavior and professionalism that permeated the staff and hopefully made members feel comfortable that they had a bona-fide leader who represented them very well. Inevitable conflicts and differences of opinion were discussed, and solutions were found to keep the association moving in a positive direction.

Although long-term effects have yet to be evaluated, it's clear the next CEO will need to be a bridge builder and a good listener. He or she will need to understand fully the very diverse socio-economic nature of golf facilities so they can understand the challenge of leading a truly inclusive organization. Ethnic and gender issues have only recently been put on the front burner at GCSAA. Environmental issues in the area of pesticide and water regulation are

Mona Made GCSAA An Industry Power

BY JOEL JACKSON



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already front and center and will need immediate attention.

Mona's move to another golf organization can continue to reap rewards for GCSAA. With his strong background in superintendent and golf course maintenance issues, he could be uniquely positioned to educate other golf organizations about the consequences of the pressures on golf course maintenance practices and products. Perhaps he'll foster an environment that approves more aggressive funding of turfgrass research. How badly does golf need a safe and effective alternative to methyl bromide? Why couldn't the Environmental Institute of Golf become one of the PGA Tour charities?

Regarding the potential list of viable candidates to replace Mona, I can't read tea leaves, and my crystal ball has been out of whack ever since Pluto was deregistered as a planet (just like so many of our professional chemicals). What I do know, however, is that the current board of directors is a group of level-headed professionals who are detail-oriented and have a big-picture vision of our profession and the needs of our members. So I'm confident the board will thoroughly explore the field of possible candidates and select someone who will be a good fit and a charismatic leader for the GCSAA.

The GCSAA unquestionably has developed positive momentum under Mona's leadership. Yes, the rising tide has indeed been lifting all boats, so we should thank Mona for his helmsmanship. In closing, I can't resist using a popular political phrase from our profession: Now we need to find the right person to help take us to the next level.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is executive director for the Florida GCSA.