

Unless you've been living under a granite tee marker, you've heard the news that Steve Mona is leaving the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Even if you weren't surprised by the news, it still may have jolted you. That's because Mona has been a mainstay in the golf course maintenance industry for several years as the GCSAA's CEO. The man with more energy than a class full of kindergartners will be missed.

So what kind of legacy will Mona leave behind when he assumes his new post as CEO of the World Golf Foundation in a few months? For certain, Mona will be remembered as a hard worker who didn't miss a day on the job in 14 years (incredible but true). He will also be recalled for his preference to live by the Golden Rule. If Mona saw the custodian of the GCSAA headquarters mopping floors on his way out the door, he would pay him the same respect as he would Arnold Palmer if he saw The King at some fancy industry shindig.

Mona didn't make many enemies during his tenure at the GCSAA. He was popular and well liked by most members. That's not to say that people didn't disagree with some of Mona's decisions. But they did so with respect and without bashing Mona like the New York media did to A-Rod when the ex-Yankee superstar was slumping. And let's not forget that Mona has led the association on behalf of its members. He didn't call the shots without input from the organization's staff and members, specifically its board of directors.

I've talked with people who disagree with several things the GCSAA has done under Mona's watch. They criticize the association for its handling of the Professional Development Initiative, saying the plan to establish standards to make the field more professional was watered down so as not to lose members. They also say the GCSAA wasted money on a study to determine whether the association should move its headquarters. Several years ago I heard accusations from a former GCSAA president that the association wasn't following Generally Accepted

What Legacy Will Mona Leave?

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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Accounting Principles in its annual report.

But despite the grumblings, even Mona's critics say the association is better off because of him. That includes superintendents Bob Marshall and Chris Gray, who both disagreed with the GCSAA's handling of PDI.

"I think he did a great job," says Gray, director of golf course operations at The Marvel Golf Club at Kentucky Lake. "I don't agree with everything he has done, but the association will miss him because he definitely has it moving into a direction of which the members are happy."

Marshall, the superintendent of Skaneateles (N.Y.) Country Club, says Mona did a good job, but he believes it's time for new blood to be injected into the association.

"I think a lot of good things happened under Steve's tenure," he says. "But maybe it's time for some new vision and direction."

Marshall has a point. Mona celebrates his 14th anniversary as CEO this month, and even he has said his lengthy tenure is an eternity for a person to head a trade association. A new leader could be good for the association. That said, Mona leaves Shaq O'Neal-sized shoes to fill.

I'll leave it to Matt Shaffer, the veteran superintendent of Merion (Pa.) Golf Club, to sum up Mona's career at the GCSAA.

"I feel as though the status of the superintendent was elevated substantially under Steve's leadership," Shaffer says. "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."

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