

We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

New Blood Welcome

Recently, much as been said and written about former Golf Course Superintendents Association of America CEO Steve Mona and his legacy, most of which falls into the category of politically correct. Without a doubt, the golf course superintendent profession has taken great strides in the past decade. However, much of the recognition must also go to the group of GCSAA members who originally identified that our membership would benefit from having a CEO lead our association and promote us as professionals.

Certainly being CEO of the GCSAA is a challenging position, and Mona did his best. It was evident that he feels deeply about this association when he had to choke back tears when saying his farewell to the membership in Orlando. I also believe he is sincere when saying that he will always be an advocate for golf course superintendents.

However, to truly evaluate anyone's tenure as a leader, failures must be taken into consideration along with the accomplishments. It was not long ago, when Mona was spearheading the Professional Development Initiative and the relocation of GCSAA headquarters to Florida, that our membership was more fractured, with more infighting than I have ever seen in it. The reality is that these two issues, regardless of the outcome, were expensive and extremely divisive. Perhaps the best result from this time period was the decision to finally include Class

A members in the group of professionals that the GCSAA promotes to the public.

I, for one, feel the association was overdue for a change in perspective. I look forward to a fresh outlook and approach, and in time, I think the change will be healthy for the GCSAA. Perhaps the truth lies in the answer to a question that a wise old man once asked of me, "Does the man make the institution, or does the institution make the man?"

**Rick Slattery, Superintendent
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Who Set That Pin?

We've all heard the question after the high-profile tournaments at our clubs. Local knowledge and eyeballing work most of the time for setting holes. But as conditions change on our greens, last week's pin location might evolve into this week's unplayable hole.

What is fair? According to the United States Golf Association, anywhere on the green is permissible, but it might not be fair. Players don't expect an uphill putt to return to them if it lags within 3 feet of a cup. Tournament golfers understand that being above a hole is their mistake, so the ability to stop a downhill putt near the cup shouldn't be a concern.

I've used the "Rule of 3s" to test tournament hole locations for a number of years as a rules official. Recently, I demonstrated and discussed this with an experienced golf course superintendent who liked its effectiveness and simplicity.

He remarked that he was going to teach it to his staff, so I thought I'd share it with you.

Here's the test:

- 1) Select a potential hole location, and place a coin or a tee on the spot.
- 2) Drop a golf ball from 3 feet (waist high) about 3 feet below the spot.
- 3) If the ball rolls more than 3 feet from where it hit the green, then the slope is too severe for the conditions.

An appropriate spot might only be 1 foot away. This method works because it involves all the factors that affect a putt. Green speed, as we know, is influenced by wind speed, slope, grain, irrigation practices (or lack of), height of cut and myriad other cultural practices, including rolling frequency, chemical usage (plant growth regulators) and topdressing practices.

The weather creates additional variables. If the weather is hot and breezy, then the test can be implemented conservatively, like allowing only 2 feet of roll. Conversely, the test can be employed more liberally if conditions are wet and slow. Test this method with some of your current hole locations, and compare the results to the complaints you typically receive around the golf course. Then you can try to curtail those complaints by pre-testing future hole locations.

You might not eliminate every complaint, but the Rule of 3s will ensure that pin placements are consistently fair and appropriately challenging.

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Golfdom's Blog of the Month



Pollution Is a Sin. But What Kind of Pollution?

The Vatican didn't do the golf course maintenance industry any

favors recently when it announced that pollution is a sin. But the announcement surely had left-leaning environmentalists smiling sinisterly.

The Vatican's No. 2 man, Archbishop Gianfranco Girotti, told the media that "ecological" offenses now account as sins. An

offense against God "is not only stealing or coveting another man's wife, it is also destroying the environment," Girotti said.

We know what constitutes stealing and coveting another man's wife. Those sins are very clear. But "destroying the environment" is not so obvious. And, unfortunately, the Vatican's murkiness regarding this measure doesn't bode well for industries like the golf course maintenance industry.

Environmentalists could spin the Vatican's message to say that they now have

God on their side in their efforts to ban the use of pesticides and other chemicals on green spaces, including golf courses.

This is not good news for the golf course superintendents who apply pesticides and fertilizers responsibly to manage turf. It is not good news for the companies who manufacture and market such chemicals responsibly.

We want to know what you think. E-mail your thoughts to Larry Aylward at lalward@questex.com.