



People of the Year

BY LARRY AYLWARD AND DAVID FRABOTTA, GOLFDOM STAFF

Without these folks, the golf course industry would be minus a lot of integrity and character

The golf course industry needs these people. Without them — without their get-go, their creativity, their kindness, their passion, their fortitude and their humor — the industry would be greatly diminished.

Hence, it's time for *Golfdom* to distribute its annual awards to recognize certain golf industry individuals for their achievements. These awards are not for formal accomplishments, mind you. Our "People of the Year" awards are granted to those whose actions reflect character and integrity.

So, let's get to it. Please hold your applause until all awards have been presented. Congratulations to this year's honorees!

The "Stand Up And Fight" Award

MARK ESODA
CERTIFIED SUPERINTENDENT
ATLANTA COUNTRY CLUB

Mark Esoda has been to the meetings and he has heard the grumblings of golf course superintendents complaining among themselves about their outside image as water wasters. Esoda, certified superintendent for the Atlanta Country Club, realizes that superintendents have to stop griping among themselves and go on the offensive to convey the message to the public that golf courses are responsible irrigators.

Esoda is doing his part to communicate that message. Thanks in part to him, superintendents in Georgia are considered irriga-

tion experts. Esoda spearheaded an effort by the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association to enact Best Management Practices for irrigation, a move that has benefited the golf industry's image statewide. It wasn't an easy task and it took several years to accomplish, but 246 of the 256 Georgia GCSA member properties stepped up to participate in surveys that documented their water use and irrigation-reduction practices.

Participating golf courses disclosed how they effectively used irrigation systems, new grass varieties, wetting agents and plant



growth regulators to use less water. They also documented their usage patterns and areas where they decreased irrigation during the 2007 drought in the Southeast.

The Georgia GCSA partnered with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) in the project, and their relationship has blossomed into one of respect. "[The GEPD] has realized we were not the water abuser they thought we were," Esoda says.

Esoda and the Georgia GCSA continue to take their message to the public. Esoda says the Georgia GCSA is telling its story to water councils, environmentalists and the general public.

"We want to bring them out to golf courses to show them that we don't waste resources like water," Esoda says.