

TOP Assistants

Greg D'Antonio was born to run ... a golf course, that is

Editor's note: If you'd like to nominate someone for the feature, please send an e-mail to Larry Aylward at laylward@questex.com.

Growing up, Greg D'Antonio was always helping his dad with yard work. It was a sign of things to come. When he was 12, he began doing yard work and lawn care for his neighbors to earn some cash.

D'Antonio, assistant superintendent at Chester Valley Golf Club in Malvern, Pa., was 16 when he got his first job working for his uncle at White Manor Country Club in Malvern. The superintendent bug had bitten.

D'Antonio enrolled at Penn State University and studied turfgrass science. Fast-forward and D'Antonio just completed his 10th summer working on a golf course. He has been as assistant superintendent for about 4.5 years.

We caught up with D'Antonio recently to talk about the profession he loves.

■ **What's your favorite part of the job?**

My favorite thing about the job is that no two days are ever the same. Each day presents new challenges and demands, and new ways to solve problems and overcome obstacles. Obviously, weather is a big determining factor in that. I also enjoy trying to motivate a team of people to work together for one common goal. No matter how good a superintendent or assistant is, he needs good people around him to succeed.

■ **Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?**

I would not be where I am without the help of all three superintendents for whom I worked: Don Brown, Matt Shaf-

fer and my current boss, Dave Visocan. All have had long, successful careers and all have taught me a great deal about how to achieve success in this industry. Dave has definitely been the biggest influence on me. From the day he hired me as a naive 21-year-old, he has been willing to teach me, listen to my ideas and allow me to make decisions as if I was in his position. He has taught me too many things to list. I feel that he has prepared me to be a successful superintendent some day.

■ **What's your favorite product or piece of equipment and why?**

I tend to be a little rough on equipment, so anything durable would be a start. Living in the Philadelphia area, where summers are usually tough, you cannot survive without a sprayer. The Toro 5700D sprayer allows us to spray tees, fairways and rough very quickly and has gotten us through some tough summer weather patterns. It's amazing how expectations have been raised everywhere to require more spraying. When I graduated less than five years ago, we only sprayed greens, tees and fairways at Chester Valley. Now we have added rough, green banks, bunker banks, tee banks and even native areas. I'm sure many courses are in the same boat and a good sprayer allows us to get it done quickly as time and minimizing disruption to the golfers are important.

■ **If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?**

I guess I would love it if golfers did not compare courses as much as they do. There are so many things that vary course to course, and I really believe no two courses can play and look the same.



■ **Describe yourself in one word.**

Determined.

■ **What is your favorite hobby and why?**

I enjoy the outdoors, staying active and playing and watching sports. Having been born and raised in the Philadelphia area, I root for all four major sports teams and am a huge Penn State football fan.

■ **What's your favorite vacation spot?**

Anywhere there is a beach and water.

■ **What's your favorite golf course besides your own?**

The East Course at Merion Golf Club. Obviously, I'm a little biased having interned there five years ago. I also have a lot of sweat equity invested there. There is no place like it from the bunkers to the wicker baskets atop the flagsticks. I'm excited for the U.S. Open to be held there in 2013.

■ **If a movie were made about your life, what famous actor would play you?**

Since I'm an assistant superintendent, I know about chinch bugs and manganese and I have a five-year plan, I would say Bill Murray. I'm still working on my own grass variety, and we don't have any gophers right now.

■ **It's your last day on Earth. What do you do?**

Sleep in. I rarely get to do it. ■