

TOP Assistants

Joe Trombino III doesn't stop until achieving perfection

Editor's note: *If you'd like to nominate someone for the Top Assistants feature, please send an e-mail to Larry Aylward at lalward@questex.com. The feature will run intermittently in *Golfdom*.*

Joe Trombino III, assistant superintendent of the Rim Golf Club in Payson, Ariz., grew up playing golf on Silver Lake Golf Course, a public facility on Staten Island, N.Y. In fact, Trombino decided he wanted to become a golf course superintendent because he wanted to improve the turfgrass conditions at Silver Lake, where he ended up working on the grounds crew as a youngster for five years.

Trombino graduated from Rutgers University in 1993.

Justin Ruiz, certified golf course superintendent of the Rim Club, says Trombino has helped the course improve agronomically and on the irrigation front. "He walks the course almost everyday during the growing season to make sure no water is wasted," Ruiz says.

Ruiz says Trombino has a different mindset from other turf managers of which he has worked.

"Joe will not stop until perfection is achieved," Ruiz says. "He is definitely a top assistant."

Golfdom caught up with Trombino recently to talk about the profession.

■ What's your favorite part of the job?

Solving problems that lead to improved turf and playing conditions. Real satisfaction is when golfers actually notice the work you've done and give you the thumbs up.

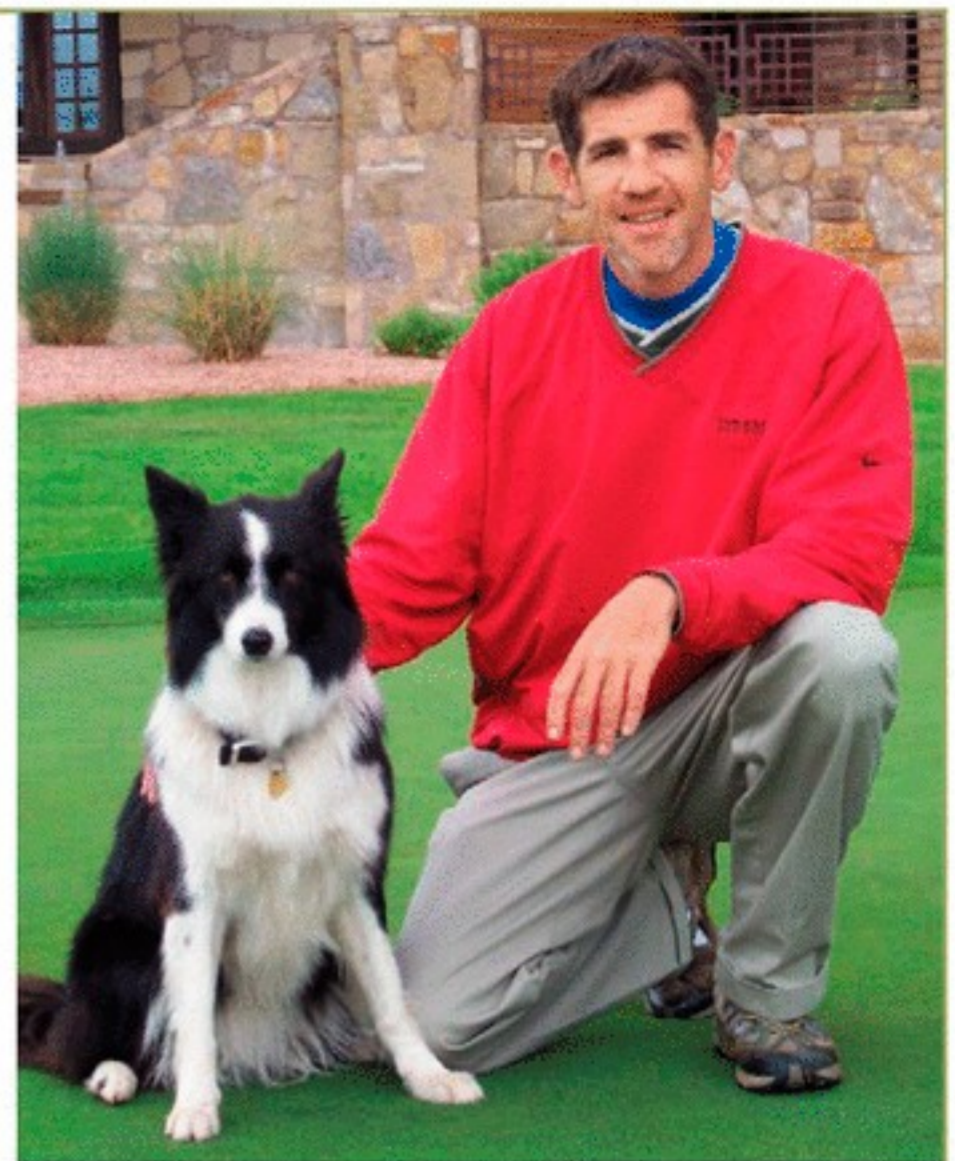
■ **Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?** Paul R. Latshaw, who is considered by many to be the best superintendent to walk the planet. I was extremely lucky to have the chance to work for him at Winged Foot Golf Club, where he taught me how to maintain a golf course in U.S. Open conditions for daily member play. I have Mr. Latshaw to thank for any success I may experience in the future.

■ **What's your favorite product or piece of equipment and why?** My favorite piece of equipment is any aerifier. To me, aerification is the foundation on which everything else is built. Without it, you have nothing.

■ **If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?** I'd like to change the amount of time and effort we put into bunker maintenance. Golfers have come to expect great playing and bunker conditions in the United States. Because bunkers are hazards, we should not expect them to be perfect, and golfers should change their level of expectation for bunker maintenance.

■ **Describe yourself in one word.** Perfectionist.

■ **What is your favorite hobby and why?** Poker. Even though there's a huge element of luck with any individual hand, the goal of the game is to make correct decisions. The more correct decisions you make, the more money you make. Basically, it's instant gratification (making correct decision), followed



by positive reinforcement (winning the money)!

■ **What's your favorite vacation spot?** The Caribbean. The Bahamas has great snorkeling, beautiful people and awesome weather.

■ **What's your favorite golf course besides your own?** Galloway National Golf Club in New Jersey. It's a Tom Fazio design, and I worked as an assistant after turf school. The course is so beautiful I would gladly volunteer my services as superintendent.

■ **If a movie were made about your life, what famous actor would play you?** When I explain to fellow turf guys how low I want to mow my tees, approaches and fairways, most of them tell me I'm out of my tree house. They think I fell off my rocker, so a good actor to play me would be Robin Williams because he played a therapist in "Good Will Hunting."

■ **It's your last day on Earth. What would you do?** I'd spend the morning with my daughter Grace, whose morning smile makes my heart melt. During the afternoon, I'd squeeze in a round of golf at Galloway or Winged Foot and then return to my family to enjoy the rest of my evening, possibly watching "Caddyshack." ■