

Off The Fr

DEEP THOUGHTS

WITH Rick Slattery

Superintendent shares views on **golf** and the **environment**. Are we ready to change?

Editor's note: Rick Slattery, longtime superintendent of Locust Hill Country Club in Rochester, N.Y., is an astute person who not only keeps up with the latest in golf course maintenance agronomics, but is well-versed in what's going on in his world, from politics to the economy to world events. *Golfdom* asked Slattery, who is on the magazine's editorial advisory board, to share some of his thoughts with readers. Slattery's column will run randomly in *Golfdom*.

In any society, there will always be groups or individuals with extreme views on various subjects. Therefore, I don't believe all environmentalists are activists, just like I don't believe all Republicans are conservative or all Democrats are liberal.

Across the country, there are countless examples of golf course superintendents who have engaged government officials and environmentalists on water shortages and other issues with very positive results. But it has always been

puzzling and a paradox to me that, as superintendents, we think of ourselves as environmentalists, but during elections we align ourselves with the political party that's considered to be anti-environment because they are the least likely to regulate or eliminate the water and chemicals we use. I think we need to send a clearer message.

In the face of the power shift in Washington, the environmental movement and increasing costs with dwindling supplies, there's going to be a new way of doing business. If our industry refuses to see what's on the horizon, it will be akin to burying our heads in the sand. It's the human condition that we don't react until there's a crisis, but in every crisis there is opportunity. Will the answers to our future be found in conservation, new and more efficient products, more precise application methods, or outright elimination of water and raw materials?

Much like the focus that's now on alternative forms of energy, this may be the perfect political climate for investment and research into new alternative means of agriculture, genetics and safer, less-costly and more available products. There will come a day, if it hasn't arrived already, when recreational agriculture will take a backseat to food-producing agriculture.

I remember in grade school, I once did a project on the premise that with uncontrolled urban sprawl the only green space left in the distant future would be largely composed of interlocking tracts of parks, cemeteries and golf courses. I still believe golf courses will be a fundamental component to the preservation of our shrinking green space, but we'll have to adapt.

Are we ready to change? ■

Golfdom would like to hear your deep thoughts on Slattery's view. Just send an e-mail to info@golfdom.com.

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what his knowledge is," Nicklaus said. "He's a very, very intense young man who really likes what he does."

Nicklaus hired Latshaw away from Oak Hill Country Club in 2003. Latshaw had just hosted the PGA Championship and had no plans to leave Oak Hill. But then Jack came calling.

Actually, Nicklaus first contacted Latshaw's father, Paul R. Latshaw, regarded as one of the profession's finest superintendents and mentors, to see if he could recommend anyone for the job. "I

know you have a lot of young guys who have trained under you, and I'm trying to find one you think would be suitable for us to have," Nicklaus told him.

The elder Latshaw didn't think twice about recommending his son for the gig. Nicklaus interviewed Paul B. and hired him. It was clearly evident at the press conference that Nicklaus is impressed with the younger Latshaw's agronomic abilities. "He has taken this course to the next level," Nicklaus said.

Nicklaus talked about how Latshaw has wowed him with what he has done

on the course to correct drainage problems. Nicklaus admitted he wouldn't have dreamed of doing some of the things Latshaw recommended to repair those problems. "That's his background; that's his education — to be able to do those kinds of things," Nicklaus said.

Nicklaus said he's more than willing to pay Latshaw more for what he brings to the table. "But don't tell him that," Nicklaus said quickly. "It will cost me too much money."

Something tells me Jack would ante up. ■