

The Reinvention WOODWARD

In this industry exclusive, Mark Woodward, former CEO of the GCSAA, talks for the first time about his resignation from the association, his new position with Landscapes Unlimited and his 13 painful days in the hospital.

When Mark Woodward pulls up in his white company truck, I need a double-take to confirm that this really is him.

He looks a lot different from the last time I saw him back in June of 2010. He's about 40 pounds skinnier, the re-

sult of a dedication to the P90X workout craze. He has a new goatee, something he grew for the heck of it while he was unemployed. *And in general, he's faster with a smile.*

Woodward leads me into his Scottsdale, Ariz., office and we sit down. He just left a USGA meeting and seems excited to be back in the golf game. He talks about the new dog he and his wife just bought (a cross between a golden retriever and a poodle known as a goldendoodle) and about how good it is to be back near his family and grandchildren.

I ask him if he's ready to begin, and then I push record.

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Golf

STORY AND
PHOTOS BY
SETH JONES,
EDITOR IN CHIEF

The new Mark Woodward is
thinner, fitter and happier than
the Mark Woodward who was
on our January 2010 cover.

Reinvention of Woodward

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Golfdom: First off, what can you say about your resignation from GCSAA — was it truly a resignation?

Mark Woodward: It truly was a resignation. It was my decision to resign. The association and I have a long history — I've been a member for 35 years. And I have a lot of good things to say and lot of passion for the association. Being a former committee member, board member, president, CEO... I love the association. I think it's a great organization.

It was tough leaving there, but it was time to move on and do something different. I think I made the right decision to resign and get back to my roots here in Arizona. I've gone full circle with my career. It's all worked out really well for me.



Golfdom: How did it feel, the day after you resigned, when you realized you couldn't go back to work at GCSAA?

Woodward: It was hard because I feel we did a lot of great things while I was there. I think I was instrumental in guiding the GCSAA through one of the nation's most severe economic downturns in years.

Golfdom: So do you have hard feelings toward the association? **Woodward:** I feel great about the association. It's been great

to me. Golf has been in my family since 1938, and my grandfather taught me early to be involved in the association. He is one of the founding members of the Cactus and Pine (GCSA chapter.) I was raised to help the people who are coming up behind you and help the profession, and one way to do that is to volunteer to



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be involved and I did that through my whole career.

I have nothing but great things to say about the association. I think it's still a very relevant association for the members to be involved in and to give back to the profession. And they provide some great programs and services. I think GCSAA will continue to do that for long, long time.

Golfdom: So let's talk about your new role as business development director for Landscapes Unlimited. How did you end up there?

Woodward: When I was off work from July (2010) to about November (2010), I did the typical thing most people do, I started networking and using my contacts to reach out to people and let them know that I was looking for a job. One of my calls was to Bill Kubly (CEO and founder of Landscapes Unlimited.) I had known him for a long time. I have always respected and thought very highly of him. He was on the Environmental Institute for Golf advisory committee, very supportive of the environmental things that we are doing with GCSAA and I interacted with him quite a bit.

He asked me to come up to Lincoln (Neb.), at the time living in Kansas that was only about a three-hour drive. So I drove up there and I met with the staff. I was going to have a follow-up interview actually with them in the latter part of October to early November and I got sick and was hospitalized. The day that I was supposed to have two surgeries on my abdomen was also the day that I was supposed to have a follow-up interview with Landscapes Unlimited leadership. So I had to call (Landscapes Unlimited

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President) Mike Jenkins on the phone — my wife actually called him on the phone because I was so sick — and said that I couldn't make it because I was in the hospital. So they were gracious enough to obviously reschedule.

Two to three weeks go by after I got out of the hospital, I regained some of my strength and then I went for the follow-up interview. They said they have this opportunity in Scottsdale, and I said well that's perfect because that's where all my family lives. They asked me to work on business development for them, which means I am out there drumming up business, which is great. I feel like I am really back in the golf business again because I am calling on golf courses and talking to a lot of people here in the southwest region and all over the country.

I feel like I am happy everyday when I go to work. There is less stress, less pres-

sure. The biggest thing is I have regained my work/life balance.

Golfdom: I bet Amy (Woodward, Mark's wife) was happy to get back to this area.

Woodward: My wife is very happy and she spends a lot of time with our grandkids. We have 10 grandkids, and 8 of them are right here in the Phoenix area.



Golfdom: After you left GCSAA, you dedicated yourself to physical fitness, and you lost a bunch of weight. But then you mentioned you also became ill and ended up hospitalized for 13 days. What happened, and how serious was it? **Woodward:** I was in trouble. It was pretty

serious. I was in the most excruciating pain that I have ever been in my entire life. I had a twisted intestine and major abdominal problems. I had a surgery about 7 to 8 days into my hospitalization, they took my appendix out and did a bunch of abdominal surgery on me which was the second time I have had abdominal surgery, the first time in 2004.

I was having X-rays almost everyday for the first 6 or 7 days I was in there. They had to figure out what the blockage was and it's hard to say this, but the doctor thinks it might be true, part of it had to do with this P90X fitness program I went on where I lost 40 pounds in 90 days. Something caused my intestines to twist. And the reason it probably happened is because of my previous surgery that I had in 2004.

Golfdom: What a horrible thing to have to go through. But it's good to see that you're healthy again today . . . Let's talk about the health of GCSAA — how was it when you arrived as CEO? **Woodward:** Steve Mona, (GCSAA's CEO prior to Woodward) no

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Jeff Plotts, director of golf course maintenance at TPC Scottsdale, discusses a project he has contracted Landscapes Unlimited to do at the course with Woodward.

Like I've said, the impact of the economy had a huge impact on the association, but I'm very proud of the way I served the association.

Golfdom: Are there any bad feelings between you and the GCSAA Board of Directors? **Woodward:** No.

Golfdom: I know there were some hard days during your time as GCSAA's CEO... do any of them stand out? **Woodward:** There were no doubt some challenging days, but when I put it in perspective and realized the entire nation... and particularly the golf industry, was going through the same things we were... that helped us get through it. It was all due to the economy.

Golfdom: Had you ever experienced that elsewhere in your career? **Woodward:** No, I have been pretty fortunate in my career, and these were unprecedented times.

Golfdom: GCSAA named your former chief operating officer — who you hired — as its new CEO. What are your thoughts on them hiring Rhett Evans to replace you?

Woodward: I think the Board made a good decision, Rhett is a talented person.

Golfdom: Does it seem strange that the person you introduced to the GCSAA now has your old job? **Woodward:** No, not at all, I'm very happy for Rhett.

Golfdom: Have you talked with him lately?

Woodward: Yes, our families are close, so we talk occasionally.

Golfdom: If you could give Rhett any one piece of advice about being GCSAA CEO, what would it be? **Woodward:** That's a pretty easy question; Just to continue to maintain the right balance of what you are doing professionally and personally.

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doubt was a good leader and left the association in good shape, but almost immediately one of the worst economic downturns in our nation's recent history began.

Golfdom: Do you think back to your time at GCSAA and think that there are things you should have done differently? **Woodward:**



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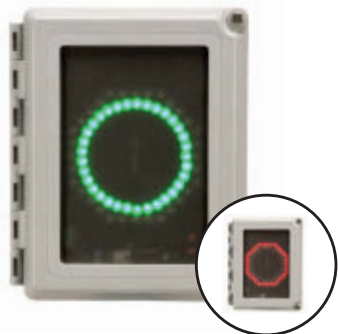
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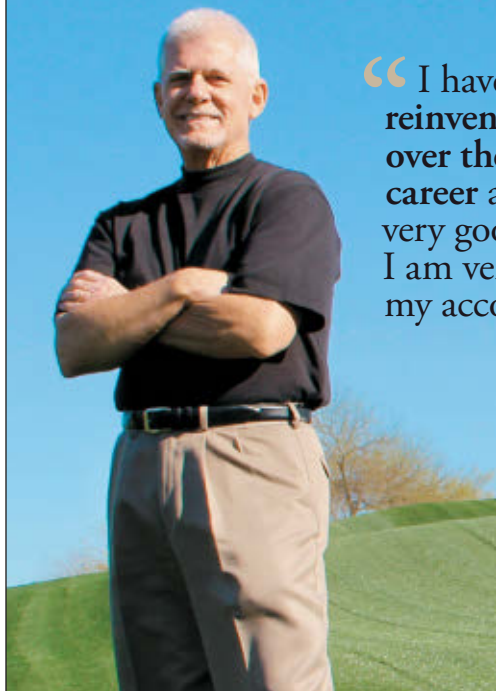


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Reinvention of Woodward



“ I have three or four reinventions of myself over the course of my career and all very, very good moves and I am very proud of my accomplishments.”

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Golfdom: How often do you reflect on your career? You've worn a lot of hats in this business — hosting a U.S. Open, president of GCSAA, CEO of GCSAA, 30 years working in Mesa, now a new career with Landscapes Unlimited... **Woodward:** I reflect on it all

the time because the golf industry has been great to me. One thing that I am very proud of, I have been able to reinvent myself at different times of my career and show my versatility as a manager. What I mean by that is, I went from an assistant superintendent to a superintendent to a golf administrator to a parks and recreation administrator with multiple facilities like tennis, baseball and those types of things. And then to be a golf operations manager and then a CEO and now, here I am a business developer. So I have three or four reinventions of myself over the course of my career and all very, very good moves and I am very proud of my accomplishments.

I can't complain about anything. It's been a great ride in every way.

Golfdom: My last question is a two-parter: What do you want your colleagues in the industry to know about your departure



from GCSAA, and what do you want them to know about how you are now where you've landed? **Woodward:** I feel very blessed to have been a part of GCSAA in so many ways. I am happy and things are going well for me right now. I also feel blessed to be working for Landscapes Unlimited. Bill Kubly gave me this opportunity and it happened to be in my hometown, which was perfect. I really want to give my all to this company. I feel like I am back in the golf business, but it's not just a golf business. I'm also working with municipalities on things like sports field development, soccer pitches and baseball fields, football fields. There are a lot of different things going on at Landscapes Unlimited which is all very exciting.

Golfdom: Mark, thanks for all your time. Best of luck to you. **Woodward:** Absolutely, Seth. Thanks for the opportunity, and best of luck to you at *Golfdom*. ■