

April 8th, 2008: I find myself in a rental car with Mark Woodward, then the superintendent at Torrey Pines, but just introduced as the incoming CEO of GCSAA. We're driving across the great state of Georgia, on our way to the Masters. The plan is to introduce Woodward to the assembled membership of the Golf Writers Association of America.

Almost three years to the day later: I find myself in a golf cart with Mark Woodward, now the director of business development for Landscapes Unlimited. We're driving around TPC Scottsdale, talking about both of our departures from GCSAA. My plan is to reintroduce Woodward — who seemingly just disappeared from GCSAA one night — to the industry in the pages of *Golfdom*.

Funny how things work out.

If this is your first time seeing Mark since he resigned from GCSAA, you'll notice he looks different. He's 40 pounds lighter. He's grown a goatee. He's smiling again.

I was pleased to catch up with Mark in Scottsdale, since I missed him at the Golf Industry Show. I can only speak for myself, but I enjoyed working for Mark. He's a fun guy to hang out with. He likes asking and talking about your family. He puts you at ease.

Mark wasn't at ease when I told him my idea for the cover of this issue. I told him I wanted him to rip in half the memorable cover of our January 2010 issue. That cover featured a close-up of Woodward, looking stressed, in black-and-white, with the line "Tough it Out" under his face.

Mark was unsure of the message I was trying to send. "Won't people see that as me trying to be negative toward my time with GCSAA?" he asked me. "I don't want to give that impression. I'm very fond of GCSAA."

As I banked around the No. 3 tee box on the Stadium Course of TPC Scottsdale, I told him how I interpreted it: Not as a slight to the GCSAA, but as a celebration of his newfound happiness at Landscapes Unlimited, and with life in general.

Let's face it, the guy on the cover of that January 2010 issue was not happy. He's worried,

Grip It And Rip It, Mr. Woodward

BY SETH JONES



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and for good reason. The association he was hired to run had been losing millions of dollars. He was handcuffed to his BlackBerry, constantly worried about incoming emails, even in the middle of the night. He and his staff had just endured a Christmas-time furlough, while many others were now drawing unemployment.

There's a big difference between the January 2010 Mark Woodward and the April 2011 Mark Woodward. He's shed pounds and he's shed stress. He's found a new job, new health, and even a new puppy that he and his wife haven't named yet. He's moved back to his longtime home of Scottsdale, Ariz., near his family.

These are happy days for Mark Woodward, I told him. So let's rip that old *Golfdom* cover in half as a way of closing that chapter and celebrating a new beginning, a reinvention.

And now he was with me. He joyfully ripped four copies right down the middle. "Tough *that* out," I thought to myself as the pages shredded.

This is Woodward's first time publicly talking about his resignation from GCSAA. He said he felt the timing was right. He wanted people to know that he didn't just fall off the face of the earth, that he still loved his career and his association. He and his wife, Amy, are happy and doing just fine.

It was a tumultuous few years for Woodward, and for the entire industry. For this particular superintendent, things worked out just fine in the end. His story isn't finished, but that last chapter is behind him.

Here's to wishing my friend the best of luck in what will probably be the closing chapters of his career. Just like that copy of *Goldom*, I hope he grips it and rips it.

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