

Ken Mangum, CGCS, host of next month's PGA Championship, has had the type of career that many superintendents dream of. While few superintendents will host the PGA Championship, all superintendents could benefit from some of Mangum's wisdom on how to succeed in this industry. **By Seth Jones**

Mangum's Man-Laws

Ken Mangum, CGCS, director of golf course and grounds at the Atlanta Athletic Club, drives up the No. 18 fairway and talks about how much the course has changed since he arrived in 1988. There's the nine-hole par-three course he designed himself on what used to be a driving range. The trees are much taller. The fairways are tighter. The bunkers are deeper. The greens, formerly bentgrass, to his relief are now Champion ultradwarf bermudagrass.

Ten years goes by fast at an exquisite golf course like the Highlands Course at AAC. The PGA Championship was played here at Bobby Jones' home club back in 2001. It returns again next month. And Mangum and his team will be ready.

"I've lost a lot of hair since 2001," Mangum jokes. "Knowing you've got it coming for 10 years, it seems like a long time, but all of a sudden it's here."

Mangum, a Southern gentleman who is always sharply dressed, is a recognizable figure in this industry. He's been the president of the Georgia GCSA and a board member of the GCSAA. More importantly, he's been a mentor, a colleague and a friend to many a professional in this business. In fact, the network of volunteers who will descend upon AAC during the week of the PGA Championship are largely former staffers and personal friends of Mangum who are happy to come back and help their mentor. The majority of the volunteers will be instantly familiar with the layout of the Highlands Course.

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PGA Preview

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With Mangum hosting the PGA Championship, *Golfdom* asked the turf master to share his keys to success with our readers. It is a topic that makes Mangum smile, as he feels he does have a few tips to share from his career, now in its 37th year.

So now, a page from Ken Mangum: his tips on succeeding in the ever-changing golf course superintendent industry.

Association involvement

Mangum doesn't like to think about it because it shows his age, but he's been a member of the GCSAA for 37 years. He believes that being active in both the regional and national associations is a huge reason for his success.

"Association involvement keeps you making contacts, it keeps your name out there in front of people," he says. "Getting



Mangum coaches Highlands Course superintendent Kasey Kauff (center) and first assistant Tyler Anderson.

"We have a responsibility to the young guys now," Mangum says. "Remember, you were the young guy a few years ago."

a job in our field, sometimes it's *who knows you.*"

For the established superintendent, Mangum still thinks being involved in the

association is important, even if it's just to pay it forward. It bothers him when he hears an older superintendent say that there's nothing to gain from being involved with chapters anymore.

"There's a point when you're the sponge soaking it up, and then there's a point when you're the sponge being squeezed," Mangum says. "We have a responsibility to the young guys now. Remember, you were the young guy a few years ago."

Continuing education

"This business has changed so much, you have to stay on top of everything to keep up," Mangum says.

But he warns that education isn't limited to keeping up on the latest turf trends.

"When I was on the (GCSAA) board, it was amazing how fast the agronomic classes filled up for the (GCSAA Conference and Show)," Mangum says. "But it's the other offerings, the non-agronomic classes — communications, business — that's what makes you successful."

"Let me tell you something: everyone in this business can grow grass."

Mangum thinks that the agronomic classes filled up first because that's what superintendents find "fun."

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Players at this year's PGA Championship should appreciate the new Champion ultradwarf bermudagrass greens. The greens will play fast and firm as opposed to stiff and wet, Rees Jones says.

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"It's your communication skills, purchasing, writing... those are the classes that can make you a success," he says. "Yet we all gravitate to turf classes. It's more important than ever to be well-rounded in this business."

Play the game

There are superintendents who play golf, and those who don't.

Put Mangum in the former category. He plays, and he plays well. He shot a 76 when he played Augusta National. He currently holds a 7-handicap, the highest it's been in a few

years, which is understandable with the 2011 PGA Championship looming. He jokes that he wants his handicap to get high enough that he can play with Tommy Witt and be competitive in the senior division at the GCSAA tournament.

He believes that being able to play the game is not only important to keeping his job, but that it also helped him get his job in the first place.

"One round of golf can change your life," Mangum says with a dead-serious look on his face. "This has happened to me a couple of times."

Mangum recalls a job interview over two decades ago he had with a fertilizer company that was looking to get into the golf market. His interview took place over a round of golf at... Atlanta Athletic Club.

"I had a great day, shot a 76, didn't throw any clubs, made a good impression," Mangum says. "I was offered the job over dinner, but I turned it down because I wanted to stay in the superintendent business."

"Two years later, the same guy was in charge of the search committee to hire the new superintendent at Atlanta Athletic Club," Mangum says. "I actually got this job two years before I interviewed for it, when I showed I knew my way around a golf course."

Mangum remembers playing a Nassau on his first day as the superintendent at AAC. He shot a 33 for nine holes, and took \$35 off a member.

"Word spread quickly that I could play, and that gave me credibility," Mangum says. "The members knew I could view the course from a player's perspective."

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Golfdom at the PGA Championship

Be sure to stop by the Golfdom Daily during the PGA Championship, beginning Monday, August 8th. *Golfdom* editor in chief Seth Jones will be at the course posting regular updates on all things interesting to *Golfdom* readers at www.golfdom.blogspot.com.

Champion Bermuda, Relocated Bunkers Await PGA

Though the PGA Championship was played there 10 years ago, players will see a much different course than what they saw when David Toms won in 2001.

In that time, the course has undergone a greens renovation, changing out its Crenshaw bentgrass greens for Champion ultradwarf bermudagrass greens. It's also moved bunkers — in 2001, fairway bunkers were located between 240 and 270 yards off the tee. In 2011, they'll be 280 to 340 yards off the tee. The bunkers have also been made deeper, with steeper faces, and the fairways are even tighter than they were in 2001, thanks to a renovation by golf course architect Rees Jones.

"The best decision the club ever made was going from bentgrass — which does not provide great summer greens in the Southeast, in my opinion — to a grass that I can give my members top playing conditions on a daily basis," says Kasey Kauff, head superintendent of the Highlands course at AAC. "The bent was always on life support. We all know how hot it gets in Atlanta in the summer. With Champion, I consistently can provide greens rolling over 12 with the firmness members desire."

Architect Rees Jones, whose father, Robert Trent Jones Sr., designed nine holes of the Highlands Course in 1967 (the other nine holes designed by Joe Finger), says that the course will still play somewhat similarly to how it played in 2001 because of the way technology has added length to the professional's game.

"We've added length, dropped some tees, on No. 6 we added a pond, we've set up a par 5 to be a drivable par 4, which is the latest thing in championship golf," Jones says. "One thing we didn't change was the contour of the greens. We changed the turf, so now the contours will be noticeable because the greens won't be stiff and wet, they'll be fast and firm, so the ball will break more."

Mangum says that the addition of Champion bermudagrass has eased his mind in the weeks leading up to the tournament.

"You look at having an event in August in the South... that's the last month you'd pick to have a major event on bentgrass greens," he says. "In 2001 we were in a situation (with bentgrass greens) where as the rounds went up, the conditions went down. Now, with Champion, as rounds go up, conditions go up."

Mangum uses an interesting statistic to drive home his point: In 2001, the course experienced 8 hours of temperatures above 90 degrees from June 15th to August 15th. In 2010, during the same time period? A whopping 760 hours above 90.

And of course the players will see a longer Atlanta Athletic Club than they did in 2001. For the 2011 PGA Championship, the Highlands Course will play to 7,467 yards and a par of 70. In 2001 the course played at 7,194 yards and a par of 70. — S.J.



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Family first

Mangum's three kids are adults now, but he recalls a scene from when two were in second grade like it was yesterday.

The event was called "Donuts for Dads." All the fathers were invited to come in and have donuts with the kids in the class. It was doubly important for Mangum to be there, as he had his two youngest, Trey (now 31) and Hayley (now 29), both in that same class.

Mangum sat there in a chair too small for him, with Trey on one side, Hayley on the other, munching away on glazed donuts. Another little boy sat at their table, nervously watching the door.

After about 30 minutes passed, some dads were getting up to leave.

"I'll never forget this," Mangum says some 20 years later. "This little boy looked at me and said, 'Well... I guess he's not coming.'"

The memory can make Mangum glassy-eyed to this day.

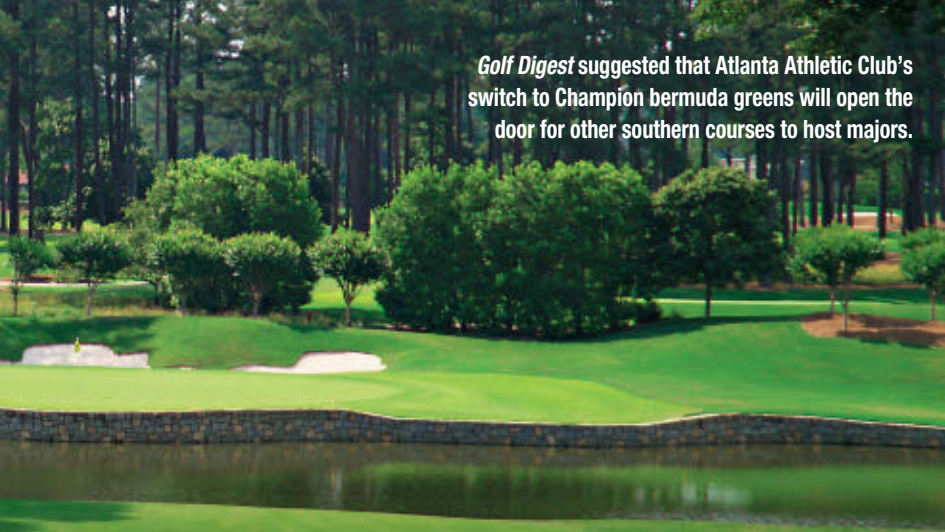
"It broke my heart, but at the same time I'm glad I saw it, because it made me be there for as many of the kids' events as possible after that," he says.

Mangum says his employer — he had just started at Atlanta Athletic Club at the time — understood the importance of being there for family.

"It was the same guy who hired me, a guy by the name of Gaylord Coan," Mangum says. "He told me, 'This is a big job, and a busy job. But you'll get in more trouble with me if you neglect your family than if you neglect your job.'"



Golf Digest suggested that Atlanta Athletic Club's switch to Champion bermuda greens will open the door for other southern courses to host majors.



Mangum smiles when he thinks about all the fun things the family did together when the kids were young. His oldest, Miranda, is now 33, with two children of her own.

"We didn't get the kids many toys for Christmas when they were little," Mangum says. "Instead we took them on trips, some amazing places, like the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls and South Africa. We've got great memories from those days, and I wouldn't trade them for anything."

Get away from the golf course

All the hours spent on a golf course, all the hours spent worrying about weather, disease pressure, equipment failures... it weighs on every superintendent.

That's why Mangum suggests to his colleagues that they find an outlet away from the golf course.

For him, he's found hobbies in both fly fishing and gardening.

"For a lot of guys it's fishing, but if it's biking or climbing or whatever, you

need that outlet away from the course, something you can do that can clear your mind," he says.

Although Mangum admits, his fly fishing trips are also taken with a group of friends who are superintendents and turf cognoscenti.

"You're still around golf, yet you're away from it. Trust me, there's something about being waist-deep in 50-degree water that just relaxes you."

So, there you have it. From being involved in your association to fly fishing, Ken Mangum hopes his advice can help some of this new generation of superintendents.

After all, he was the young guy a few years ago. ■

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