

But Edwards, who is black, says the GCSAA and other golfing organizations have always supported his efforts at John Deere, and he'd recommend the industry as a place of employment to other minority groups.

The perception remains — even among minorities working on golf courses — that it's difficult to get ahead in a predominantly white industry, however. Donald Coleman, who joined Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert, Calif., in 1996 as a machine operator, says minorities have a difficult time getting opportunities in the industry. Coleman, who is black, says he trained many of Desert Willow's employees who went on to get assistant superintendent jobs. He said he was hurt when he was passed over for promotions.

"There were times that I wondered if my race was holding me back, although I couldn't ever be sure," Coleman says. "It was clear that I had to do something extra to make myself more attractive to employers."

Along came Rudy Zazueta, superintendent at Desert Willow, who joined the course last year and mentored Coleman. Now Coleman, who entered the industry in 1978 at 19 after spending his high school years mowing lawns and helping landscape contractors, expects to graduate from College of the Desert in Palm Desert with a turf degree in 2001

### The slow process of change

For now, turf schools offer little hope that they will be a catalyst for immediate change. Golfdom conducted an informal survey of the country's top turf schools about minority participation in their programs. It revealed black students are rare, and only a handful of other minorities have passed through the programs in recent years. It's not for lack of institutional pressure to diversify, however.

"The administration has come down on us hard on many occasions for our lack of ethnic diversity," says George Hamilton, senior lecturer in the turfgrass program at Penn State University. "It's definitely an area where we have to do better, but it's not as easy as one might think."

Hamilton says schools must find innovative ways to interest more minorities in the profession, perhaps through alliances with colleges that have large minority populations.

Historically black colleges, many of which were founded as agricultural schools and have active turfgrass programs, form a network that could be valuable to the industry if called upon (for a list of historically black colleges, visit <http://ledonline.com/cq/hbcu>). Many of these colleges also have Web sites where employers can post job opportunities, and career development and placement offices can help employers find students for internships.

Sarah Stringer, director of career development at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Ala., says she'd love to work with the golf course maintenance industry, since many of her students have never considered it as a career.

"The golf industry has never contacted us, and we haven't

### Minority Membership

In its 1998 membership survey, the GCSAA offered its 15,310 Class A, Class B and Class C members an opportunity to indicate their ethnicity.

Compare those numbers to the U.S. population in general:

	GCSAA	U.S. POPULATION*	PERCENTAGES	
			GCSAA	U.S.
Total	15,310	272,878	100.0%	100.0%
White	11,364	224,692	74.2%	82.3%
Hispanic	213	31,365	1.3%	11.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	164	10,887	1.2%	4%
Black	29	34,903	.01%	12%
Native American	N/A	2,396	N/A	.08%
No Preference	48	N/A	.03%	N/A
Left Question Blank	3,492	23%	N/A	N/A

\* in thousands

SOURCE: GCSAA AND U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

been as aggressive as we should have been in contacting it," Stringer says. "It's a natural fit for both sides, so you'd think we'd be able to come together."

"It's going to be a long process to change the face of the industry," Hamilton says. "There's just not enough minorities who are interested in coming to the turf schools. We're trying, but we're not succeeding."

Tuskegee's Stringer says racism doesn't always explain low minority participation in a profession. Sometimes it's as simple as a lack of communication between groups. Once groups

*Continued on page 23*

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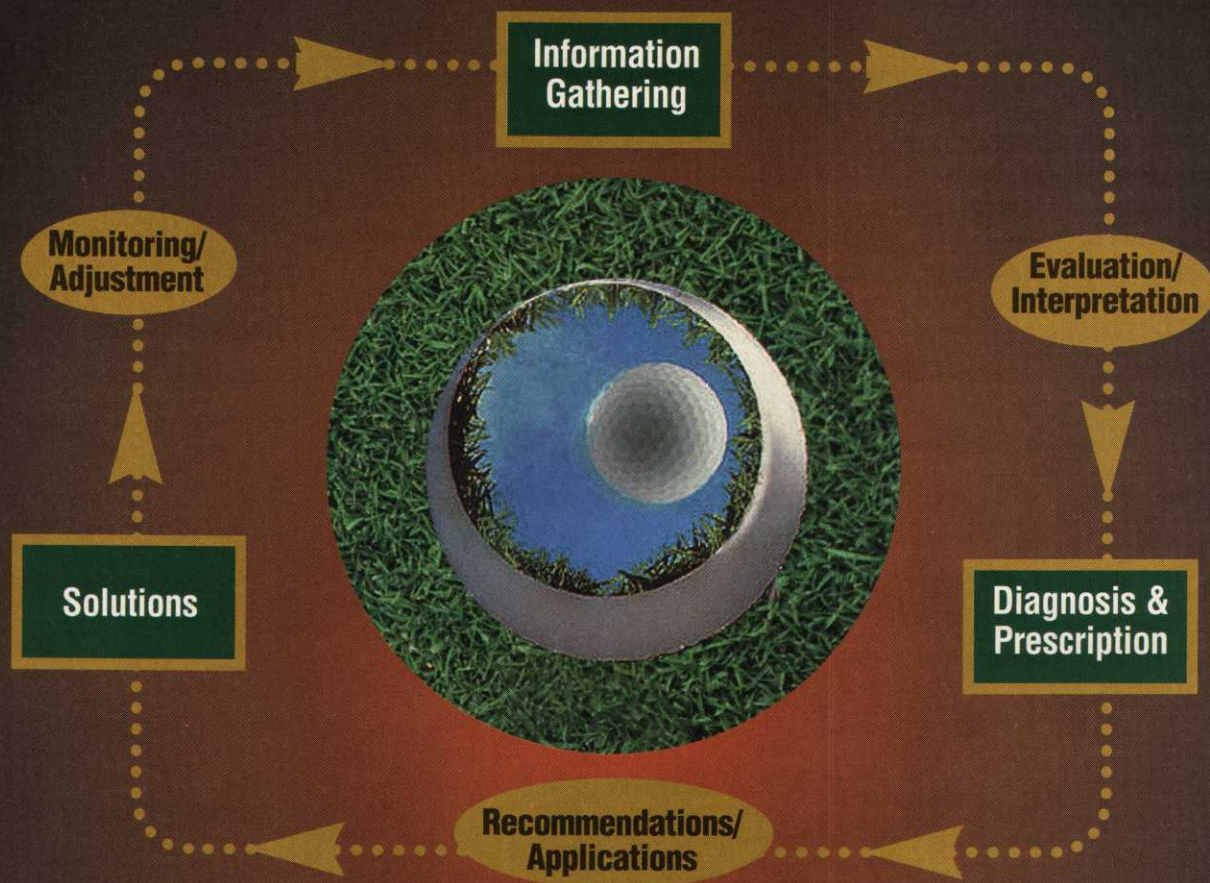
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Platinum Tee Club





## Winds of Change

*Continued from page 21*

discuss common interests instead of differences, it often opens new opportunities, she says.

### Early exposure a must

John David, president of the Multicultural Golf Association of America (MGAA), agrees that the biggest barrier to minority participation in the industry is lack of communication.

"The industry has not done a good job of presenting the job opportunities to the kids," says David, whose Westhampton Beach, N.Y.-based organization coordinates eight-week golf clinics that focus on introducing underprivileged children to the game. "If you don't reach out to these youngsters, most of whom don't have ready access to a course, they'll never know the industry exists."

Attracting minority candidates to take lower-paying jobs in the suburbs when higher-paying jobs at fast-food restaurants are around the corner isn't easy, says John King, assistant superintendent for the city of Albuquerque, N.M., and former superintendent at Santa Fe CC in Santa Fe, N.M. King says pay scales in the industry must rise.

"We're competing with jobs that are paying well above minimum wage," King says. "We have to bring our wages up to scale if we're going to compete for the attention of minority employees."

It also helps to be bilingual. Bryan McFerren, superintendent at the University of Maryland GC in College Park, Md., urges su-



**Kevin Hutchins, superintendent at the Presidio GC in San Francisco (kneeling), teaches kids about agronomy at an MGAA-sponsored event.**

perintendents to learn a second language so they can communicate more easily with staff members who may not speak English.

"Some [superintendents] are stubborn and say, 'I'm not going to learn their language. They should learn mine,'" McFerren says. "If you take that attitude, however, you risk cutting yourself off from reaching an entire group of people that will make great workers."

McFerren says he advertised a position on a local Hispanic

## PGA's Progress

The PGA of America has come a long way since it lifted its 1961 ban on blacks as members of the organization. Jim Awtrey, CEO, says that in the last 39 years, his organization has worked hard to include minorities in the golf business.

"The minority community is an important aspect of the PGA's commitment to golf," Awtrey says. "Attracting qualified minorities to the game and business of golf is one of our objectives."

Awtrey says the PGA's diversity department created several programs that expose inner-city kids to golf and administers minority scholarship programs with the 10 U.S. colleges and universities that conduct PGA-sanctioned professional golf management programs. The PGA also provides employment seminars and career days for minorities interested in joining the business.

"We will continue with plans to facilitate more minority involvement in the game," Awtrey says.

radio station and was overwhelmed by the response. Within three days, McFerren says he received 20 phone calls about the job from people who had heard the radio spot.

"I wasn't prepared for the number of responses I got," McFerren says. "It just takes a little creativity to reach new markets."

He also recommends recruiting Hispanic workers from within an existing crew.

Joe Stegman, manager of maintenance and recruiting de-

*Continued on page 25*

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# Superintendents Speak Out

"HISPANICS ARE NOT GETTING A FAIR shake. We take advantage of their great work ethic and don't do enough to build up their self-esteem. I constantly have to remind myself to be fair and not let my latent, small white-town upbringing come out of dormancy. That said, prejudice is still prevalent in the private sector in Chicago."

### Oscar Miles

CGCS

The Merit Club  
Chicago, Ill.

"HERE IS MY UGLY SIDE COMING OUT. I love immigrants. Both my parents were [immigrants], but they also learned English very quickly in order to survive. It irritates me that we have to learn another language in order to communicate with workers in this country. Don't

get me wrong, I'm not picking on the Spanish. I have a Lebanese guy working for me — 22 years in this country and he can't speak English. I'm not going to learn Lebanese. When I need to explain something to him, I call his kids and let them explain. Would any one of you move to another country and expect the staff to learn your language? I don't think so."

### Anthony Grieco

CGCS

Silver Creek CC  
Hellerton, Pa.

THE PARTICIPATION OF MINORITIES in the business is low at this time. The First Tee Program will introduce more minorities to the game of golf and could potentially introduce minorities to the maintenance of golf courses. Anyone

who has dedication and drive will thrive in the business — this goes for everyone.

### Marc Pucky

Assistant Superintendent  
The Country Club  
Pepper Pike, Ohio

"ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF minorities are small, there are more minorities involved in the golf industry than ever before. They will continue to increase as more people are introduced to the game. I'm not sure it is an issue, and I do not believe anyone is holding them back."

### Jim Nicol

CGCS

Hazeltine National GC  
Chaska, Minn.

"ANYONE WHO IS INNOVATIVE, dedicated, and hard working with the ability to lead should join the superintendent ranks

regardless of race, creed or color. America is a melting pot, and anyone with a passion for golf course maintenance should have the opportunity to act on their dreams."

### Mark McCarel

Assistant Superintendent  
The Country Club  
Pepper Pike, Ohio

"TIGER WOODS and the USGA may drive up the number of minorities involved in golf at all levels. I believe that a love of the game can only be enhanced by exposure to it, and the younger the better. The USGA's initiative to keep golf affordable is commendable. I believe it's all about exposure, and the understanding that when you find a job you love you will never work a day in your life."

### Greg O'Heron

Superintendent  
Peterborough Golf & CC  
Peterborough, Ontario

*Continued from page 23*

velopment of Palm Springs, Calif.-based American Golf Corp., says his company acclimates its superintendents to find alternative labor sources as part of the company's training program.

Stegman says some of the company's superintendents have recruited successfully at churches, high schools and community centers. He also suggests advertising in newspapers that specifically target minority communities.

"You can't wait for résumés of minority candidates to fall into your lap," Stegman says. "Sometimes it's not the easiest way to recruit, but it will enrich your staff with new ideas and new insight that you might not get otherwise."

In 1998, MGAA added a golf course maintenance component to its clinics, David says. The kids enjoyed learning about the agronomy of a course, he says.

"Many of these kids would have never thought of course maintenance as a career because they wouldn't have been exposed to it," David says. "You've got to get them involved early."

Involvement is a word heard often when the subject turns to including more minorities in the industry. Early inclusion is vital if the game and its offshoots — including maintenance — are to be viewed as something other than an industry that excludes people who are not white and rich.

Barbara Douglas, president of the National Minority Golf Foundation (NGMF), says providing affordable golf in urban areas would expand golf beyond its suburban roots. Her organization plans to refurbish 100 courses around the country

*Continued on page 27*



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## Winds of Change

*Continued from page 25*

in those areas, and she hopes that exposure will help minorities understand the opportunities the game offers.

Douglas says she hopes her organization will become a clearinghouse for minority scholarship and internship opportunities. The NMGF's Web site, [www.nmgf.org](http://www.nmgf.org), has space for scholarship and internship information, as well as space to post job opportunities.

"If you can get them playing, you may be able to keep them in the industry," Douglas says. "It's not going to happen overnight, but if only one out of every 10 kids you introduce to the game sticks with it, then you're going to have a profile that changes over time.

"But you have to be active in the community on a continual basis so they know who you are," she adds. "Otherwise, you're just someone who came to visit."

The GCSAA plans to foster that long-term approach to minority communities among its members in coming years. Kim Heck, senior director of career development for the GCSAA, says the organization will support superintendents with a tabletop presentation package featuring pamphlets, videotapes and other information about the profession so they can recruit at career fairs. But the goal she puts the greatest priority on for 2001 is to educate superintendents about the importance of becoming visible in their communities.

"Get involved in children's lives," Heck says. "Most of our members would make great role models. By getting involved and making a difference, you not only serve your community, you expose kids to an industry they may not have considered as a viable career option before."

Ken Sakai, president of Golf Pacific Management Co., which develops and manages golf courses in the United States and countries around the Pacific Rim, says minorities, like others who enter the industry, need mentors. He credits those who helped him choose a direction early in his career. Combined with his own hard work, Sakai, who is Japanese-American, says his mentors offered him advice on what steps he needed to take to get ahead in the industry.

"In my day, opportunities for minorities were limited to those who knew [the right] people," Sakai says. "Those connections are still vital, even as more opportunities open up."

Larry Powell, who has been a Class A member of the GCSAA since 1973, credits his family with teaching him how to work effectively in an industry that once tried to keep his father out. He's also a patient man, and he knows the only way to change the face of the profession is to work with fellow superintendents to do so.

"I'm used to being a minority in organizations I've been involved in," Powell says. "I was the only black student in both my elementary and high schools. So being a member of the GCSAA as a minority doesn't bother me. You can only change an organization if you join it and change it from within." ■

## Partners for Diversity

GCSAA recognizes the importance of forming partnerships to promote the industry to minorities. Here is a partial list of the initiatives with which the organization is involved:

**Scotts Scholars** — three annual scholarships for women, minorities, people with disabilities and the financially underprivileged.

**National Minority Golf Foundation** — exposes the profession through NMGF's junior golf program; participates in NMGF seminars and conferences; serves as a resource to minority junior golf programs that belong to the NMGF, including the Young Golfers of America; and supports the National Minority Junior Golf Scholarship Association financially.

**PGA Tour Minority Internship Program** — provides internship possibilities to the program.

**Tiger Woods Foundation** — provides superintendent speakers at foundation events.

**Multicultural Golf Association of America** — sponsors a golf clinic for the organization at its annual meeting in November.

**National Minority College Golf Scholarship annual championship** — attends a career fair in conjunction with this event.

**The First Tee program** — GCSAA members serve on First Tee chapter boards of directors, advise on agronomic issues and contribute tips to a participant manual on golf etiquette.

Jeff Bollig, director of communications for GCSAA, says the organization is also holding discussions with the PGA of America to discuss opportunities in golf for minorities and traditionally black colleges.

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If golf balls are flying,

golf course workers should be

wearing hard hats, according to OSHA.

But the debate continues on whether

or not helmets should be required.

# Head Case

**T**hey go up and come down, so you don't have to be a physicist to classify golf balls as flying and falling objects.

If you agree with that — and you work on a golf course while duffers are at play — then you should be wearing a hard hat. If you're not donning a helmet on the course, you could be cited for breaking the rules.

According to an Occupational Safety & Health Administration regulation, "the employer shall ensure that each affected employee wears a protective helmet when working in areas where there is potential for injury to the head from falling objects."

If falling golf balls don't pose potential for injury, neither do 100-mph Randy Johnson fastballs that run in and under the chin. But it doesn't take a census count to show that a

lot of superintendents and golf course maintenance workers don't wear hard hats.

"Most workers aren't wearing them," confirms Sarah Bundschuh, an Atlanta-based safety consultant to the golf course maintenance industry.

At Salinas Golf and CC in Salinas, Calif., some workers wear hard hats and some don't.

"It's not a mandatory thing here," admits Robert Hedberg, general manager of the course. "But it's encouraged."

Workers may not be wearing hard hats because they know OSHA is not enforcing the regulation. "If OSHA came out and inspected your course and your workers were not wearing hard hats, you probably wouldn't be cited," Bundschuh reveals.

But if a serious injury occurred because a worker was hit in the head with a golf ball — and that worker wasn't wearing a hard hat — then OSHA would probably cite the course, she adds.

DAN BEEDY

BY LARRY AYLWARD, MANAGING EDITOR



The hard hat issue is unclear among OSHA regulators, Bundschuh insists. Some state regulators require golf course workers to wear hard hats and others don't.

Gayle Fratto, a safety consultant for the Georgia Research Institute (which works with OSHA on a contractual basis), says OSHA doesn't crack down on the golf course industry because it's not considered a high-hazard industry. Still, he advises maintenance workers to wear hard hats.

Hedberg says the hard hat issue is often black and white.

"At some courses, you wear helmets or you don't work there," he says. "There are no ifs, ands or buts."

It's that way at courses operated by Dallas-based ClubCorp. "Our (policy) has it that you wear a hard hat if you're on the maintenance crew," confirms Monte Carmack, ClubCorp's vice president of golf operations.

Rick Niemier, a superintendent for 14 years who currently works at Saddleback Ridge GC in Solon, Iowa, has been hit twice by golf balls — in the back and on the ankle — but he still doesn't wear a hard hat.

Niemier, who previously worked as superintendent at Fairfield Golf and CC in Fairfield, Iowa, didn't require crew members there to wear hard hats either. "My policy has always been to provide them to my employees, but I've never required them to wear them," he says.

### Common sense

For some workers, wearing a hard hat comes down to common sense. If a course is closed and there's no chance of golfers hacking balls destined for workers' heads, crew members may forsake their hard hats while they spray the greens, and they wouldn't be breaking OSHA's rule.

But if two busloads of beer-drinking golfers are scheduled to play a course — and not one of these Bluto BlutarSKI types is in a hurry to finish in four hours — then crew members would be wise to wear hard hats and abide by OSHA's rule.

While Bundschuh believes hard hats offer little protection from golf balls because they only cover a small portion of the body, she ad-

*Continued on page 30*

## A Bellyful ... of Laughs

Gettin' plunked in the paunch with a golf ball is no laughing matter, but superintendent Ron Kirkman offers a story that's a real rib tickler.

Kirkman was mowing and striping the first fairway at the Needham GC near Boston early one evening about three years ago when he saw a white flash coming at him faster than a Pedro Martinez speedball. Kirkman had just scaled a small hill on his mower and was about 230 yards from the tee when he saw a golfer in his follow-through. "Where'd he come from?" Kirkman muttered to himself, a heartbeat before pinpointing the golfer's ball bound for his belly.

The golfer, a member at Needham known as a big hitter, watched Kirkman ride up over the hill after he hit his ball and muttered to himself the same thing as Kirkman. The golfer knew he hit his ball toward Kirkman, but he lost sight of it in the evening sun. But Kirkman saw it floating like a butterfly and soon felt it stinging like a bee.

"I didn't even move," Kirkman says. "I knew it was going to hit me, so I just tightened my stomach."

Remarkably, Kirkman caught the ball in his breadbasket and kept on mowing and moving along. Then he started scheming, as all practical jokers do.

Kirkman made his turn and headed away from the golfers and back down the hill. Out of sight from the golfer, he threw the ball in the fairway.

When he made another turn and headed back toward the tee, the golfer motioned him to come over. The golfer explained that he didn't see Kirkman until a second after he hit his ball and was afraid it might have hit the superintendent, who was wearing his best poker face.

"I told him I saw the ball in flight the whole way," Kirkman says. "I told him that it was a great hit and went way over my head."

The golfer believed Kirkman and was ecstatic to learn he hit the ball about 330 yards — a career-long drive.

Kirkman's gut was black and blue for a few weeks. "It hurt like a bugger," he says, especially when he laughed about his prank.

To this day, the golfer, whom Kirkman knows well, doesn't know the real story.

"I can't let on," Kirkman says. "He'd be heartbroken."

But Kirkman does bring up the, ahem, "monstrous" drive.

"Sometimes I ask him if he ever hit another drive that far," Kirkman quips. "He can hit the ball pretty far, but he can't hit 330 yards. He can't hit it farther than Tiger Woods."

— Larry Aylward



MIKE KLEMM



## Head Case

*Continued from page 29*

mits that some protection is better than none.

"If you're in a situation where there are a lot of golfers and you're in the middle of

them, then a hard hat is added protection," she notes.

If maintenance workers are involved in more heavy-duty work, like sawing tree branches, then hard hats are essential, safety experts agree.

Fratto, who has visited several construction sites, says workers there complain about wearing hard hats because they cause perspiration and can be uncomfortable in the heat. But Fratto says well-constructed hard hats feature good airflow and aren't as hot and irritating as workers claim.

Niemier begs to differ.

"They're hot and uncomfortable," he says of hard hats. "Every time you bend over to do something, they fall off."

Bundschuh says some course workers wear pith helmets, particularly to combat sunburn. But a pith helmet is not a hard hat in OSHA's eyes because it's not approved by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Approval, she notes.

*Continued on page 32*

### Maybe They Should Wear Mouth Guards

Hard hats are supposed to protect you, right? They do, most of the time.

The story goes that a turf maintenance worker at Westchester CC was riding a fairway mower when he heard a golfer yell, "Fore." Thankfully, the worker was wearing a hard hat.

The worker, following his instincts, ducked his head to avoid the errant golf ball. But when he ducked, his hard hat fell from his head, bounced off the mower's steering wheel and smacked him in the face. The golf ball missed him, but the head-on collision with the hard hat left the worker with a chipped tooth.



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