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Circle No. 113



Hole with a View

It's not the best hole on the course, but you can't beat the view from No. 10 at Prescott Lakes GC in Prescott, Ariz.

The hole is located at one of the highest elevations on the Hale Irwin signature course, which opened in July. Prescott Lakes is set in the high desert and rolling hills about 90 miles north of Phoenix.

"The views are spectacular," says Virgil Robinson, certified golf course superintendent.

The San Francisco Peaks, the highest mountains in Arizona, and the Granite Dells, picturesque rock formations, are landmarks that are clearly in view. More than 13 acres of lakes and streams wander through the 7,200-yard course.

The hole is a short par-4 (372 yards from the back tees), but achieving par is a challenge because of the tiered green and the seven bunkers that surround the green, Robinson says.

"The only entrance to the green is at four to six o'clock," he adds. "Otherwise, you must carry your shot over the bunkers."

Robinson and his crew face several maintenance challenges on the hole. Because it's located at a high elevation, the wind blows vigorously. "So getting good irrigation down is difficult at times," Robinson says.

Of course, there's going to be a lot of hand mowing when there's 11 bunkers on a hole, so you could say No. 10 is labor intensive.

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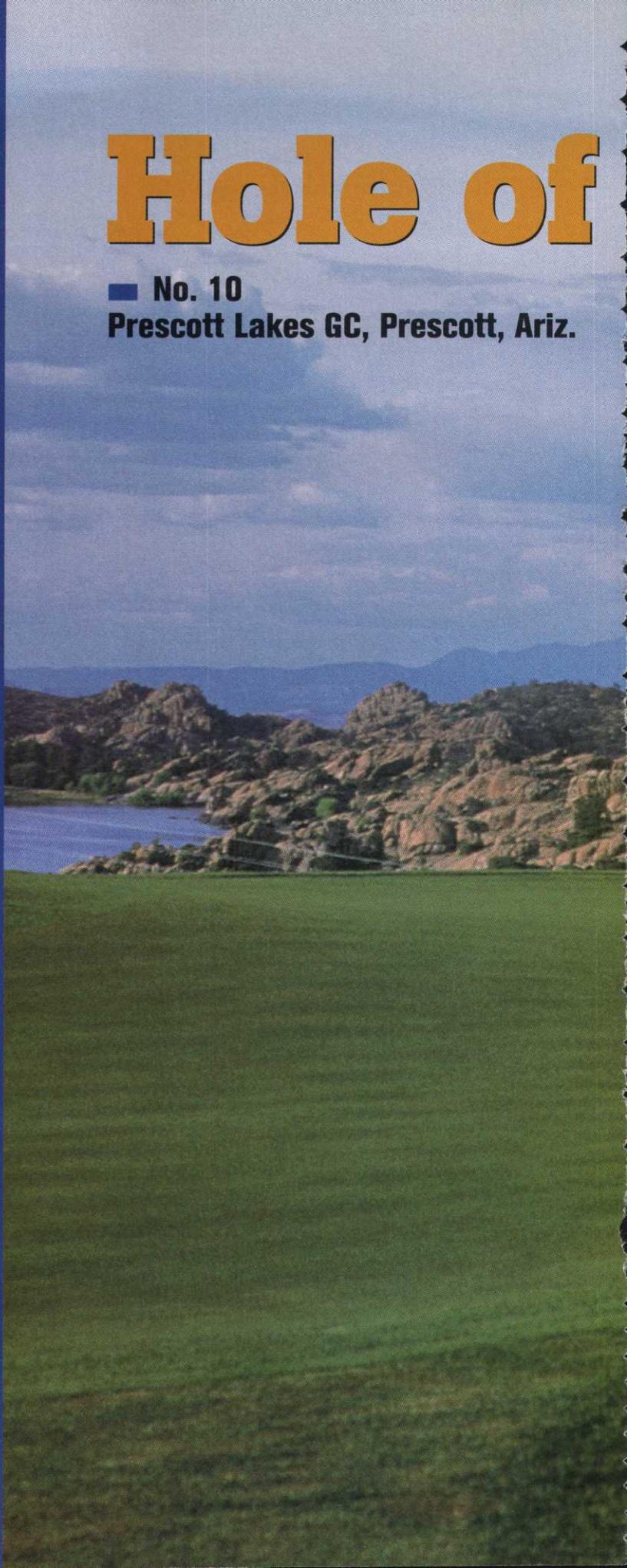


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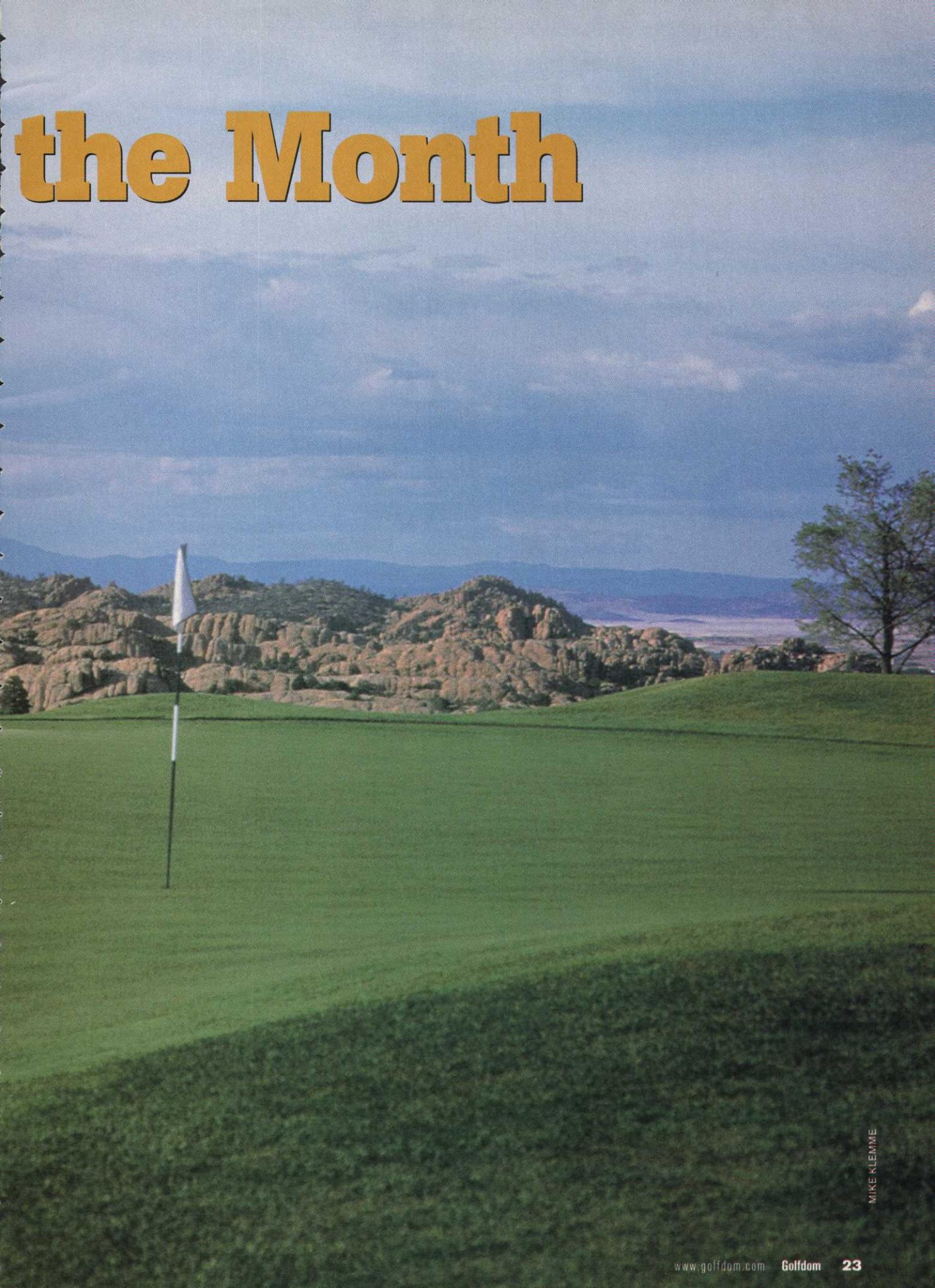
Hole of

■ No. 10

Prescott Lakes GC, Prescott, Ariz.



the Month



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Circle No 114

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ancient Mariner bemoaned his lack of drinkable water, despite the fact that his ship was surrounded by the sea. Many superintendents will find themselves in the same position if they don't take stock of how much water they use and find alternative sources.

As always happens when a crisis approaches, the government is about to get involved. The momentum in favor of Total Maximum Daily Load legislation builds daily at the EPA, and local water management districts frantically search for new sources of water. Meanwhile, those of us on the front lines search for solutions when it comes to water availability and the quality of that water.

Yet, more courses open every day. Even if the marketing initiatives work to get more players, that doesn't solve the problem of finding water to irrigate them.

The recent GCSAA Leadership Survey found that 31 percent of superintendents use less water than 10 years ago. These folks are preparing for the future. Then there were 33 percent who reported using more water than a decade ago. These folks are in for a rude awakening. Sixteen percent said they were using the same amount, and they hope they won't have to change their practices.

Finally, there are the clueless 10 percent who have no idea how much they use. If you don't know how much water you use now, you'd better figure it out because you're going to have even less to use in the near future.

When we reach drought conditions as we did in 1999, water districts scramble to conserve water by issuing water-use restrictions. They seem content to force professional turf managers to pick a day of the week to water, instead of constructing an irrigation plan based on common sense.

The problem is the government's over-regulation of how much water a course can use. If a course is slated to water the front-nine fairways on Tuesday, it's easy for a nosy neighbor to play water police and call in an assumed violation.

Water Will Soon Not Be Everywhere

BY JOEL JACKSON



IF YOU DON'T KNOW
HOW MUCH WATER
YOU USE, FIGURE IT
OUT BECAUSE
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NEAR FUTURE

Both Stuart Bozeman, superintendent at the Seven Rivers Golf & CC in Beverly Hills, Fla., and the Southwest Florida Water Management District deserve a big "atta boy" for their recent efforts to revise the water restrictions together. Bozeman and his fellow superintendents are lobbying for a percentage reduction in the daily average of the amount of water they can use rather than the arbitrary day-of-the-week method.

The good news is that the water district is listening. This approach requires a certain level of trust on the district's part, but verification is possible through meter readings. If a course is suspected of violating the agreed-upon reduction, the district could check the meter and log books.

Expanded use of reclaimed water, of course, is the most logical source of relief, but it has its limits. Municipalities should look at courses as a partner in solving wastewater disposal problems and not as a financial opportunity to gouge courses with high connection and use fees. Cost sharing might be an equitable solution to the problem.

Finally, coastal communities and golf courses are going to have to bite the bullet and quit sucking water from inland sources. They must build those reverse osmosis plants and tap the sea water they have around them. There's a few courses already doing that, and they are ahead of the game.

Golf course owners and architects must reduce the amount of turf on the new courses and superintendents should start budgeting water tighter than dollars. Remember, the ancient Mariner's crew died for lack of water. Don't let it happen to you.

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

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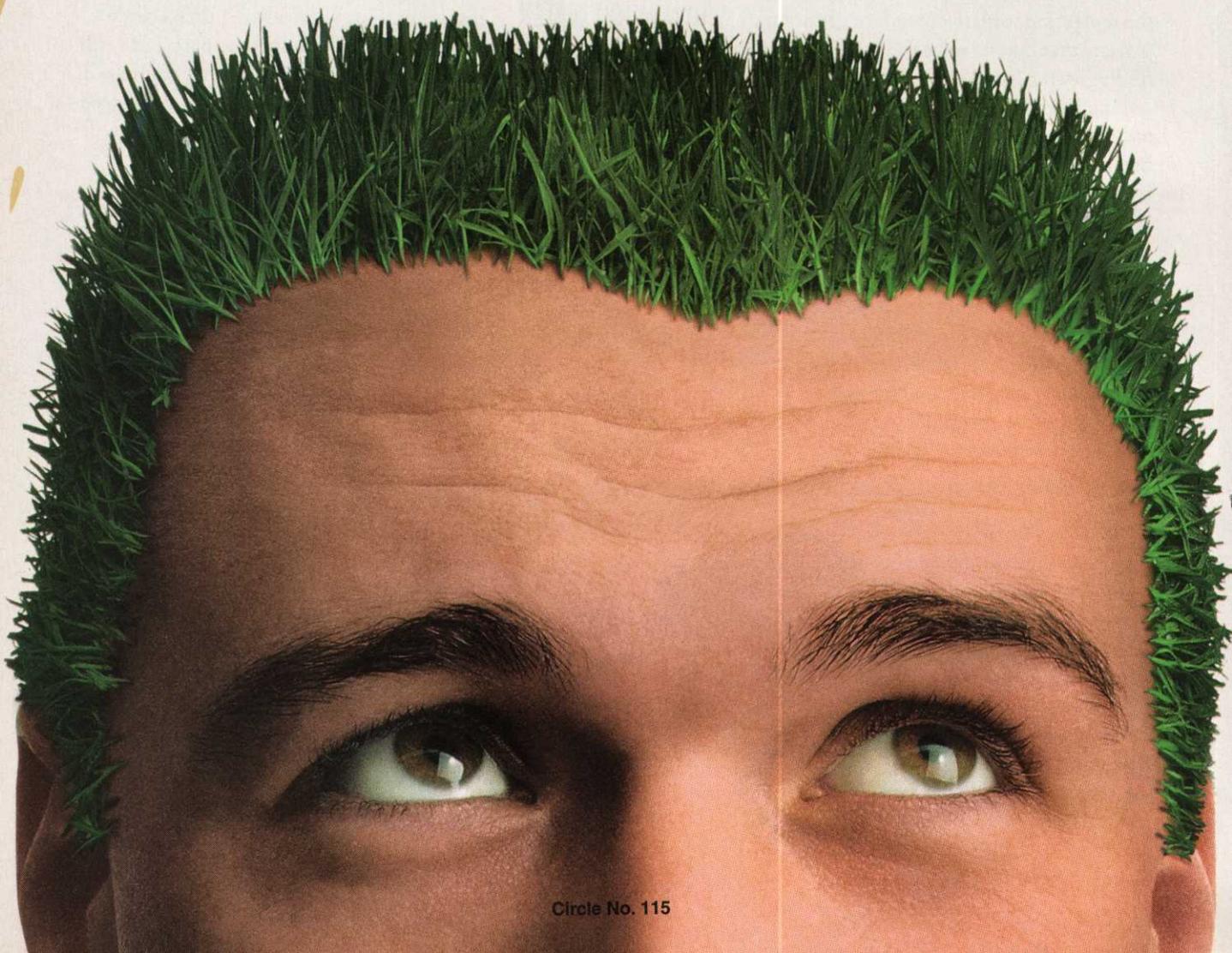
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THE Golfdom Report



Taking the Industry's Temperature

When we decided last year to devote an issue of *Golfdom* to examining the state of the industry, we knew we should do some research to back it up.

But rather than asking a

bunch of questions about what kind of mowers you buy or how often you fertilize, we decided to take the oral temperature of the industry through a telephone survey.

So we hired an outside re-

search company to call more than 100 superintendents around the country to ask them about issues ranging from job security to electronic commerce. We also did an independent survey of the Pro-

PDI

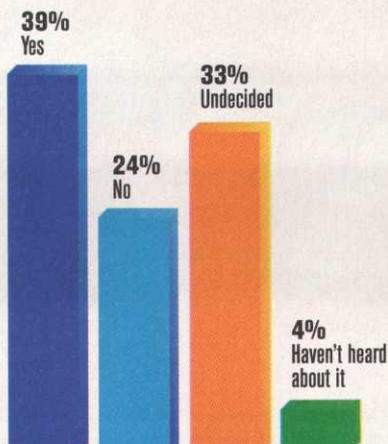
Is Half a Mandate Better Than None?

Calling the proposed Professional Development Initiative "a little controversial" is like calling Tiger Woods "kinda good." It has been the most hotly discussed political issue in the recent history of GCSAA and the profession.

In a nutshell, PDI would increase the standards required for Class A membership in the association through a combination of experience and educational requirements. The association's leadership believes that owners will respond to the higher standards and be more likely to seek out, hire and better compensate "branded" Class A members. An underlying theme is a general concern that without tougher barriers in place, job security and salaries may erode.

Opponents have decried the proposal as elitist and not in sync with the realities of a job where real-life experience and the ability to deliver results matter more than a degree. This type of criticism led the Membership Standards Resource Group, the body leading the development of the proposal, to relax the initial proposal to allow those without degrees to achieve Class A. Current Class A members would retain their standing under a grandfathering clause.

Do you support the final version of the proposed GCSAA Professional Development Initiative - or PDI?



The topic has dominated the "Talking it Over" online forum on the association's site, and postings from both sides have occasionally been nasty and personal. In an industry that prides itself on its sense of fraternity, the divisiveness has been painful to see.

Some supporters of the proposal have maintained that the opposition was a small but vocal group of boo birds who weren't reflective of the mainstream membership. In response, opponents have asked the association to survey the membership on the issue. To our knowledge, no survey results have been released by the association. Therefore, *Golfdom* included two questions about the proposal in its Superintendent State of the Industry Survey.

When asked if they support the final version of the proposal, 39 percent said "yes" while about a quarter said "no." A third said they were still undecided when the survey was done in October.

Several non-members and one Class A member (4 percent) had heard nothing about PDI. When non-members and non-voting members (Class B and C) are removed from the sample, the percentage of support goes up slightly (42 percent) while opposition decreases slightly (22 percent).

It's important to note here that mem-

fessional Development Initiative, something many superintendents asked us to do.

In this special report, you'll see more information about the 107 18-hole superintendents interviewed by the researchers. Should we have

included 9-hole superintendents or others in the study? Maybe. But for purposes of this first *Golfdom Report*, we wanted to focus on the core of the profession — and most perceive that to be 18-hole courses. Is this relatively

small survey statistically significant? We're told that's it's accurate to within +/- 10 percent. It's not perfect, but it's a good indicator of how people feel.

What is perhaps most interesting about the survey is

the lack of "shocking" results. Like most Americans, superintendents are generally comfortable with the way things are going. There were, however, a few surprises, as you'll discover when reading the report.

bers do not vote on PDI. First, the question on the ballot relates only to the changes in membership classification — not PDI itself. Any change in membership classification requires a two-thirds majority to amend the bylaws. Second, chapter delegates will cast the vast majority of votes on behalf of local members based on straw polls taken at meetings held this winter.

In short, *Golfdom's* survey can only give a sense of how members feel about the proposal, not how they would necessarily vote if they could vote.

The question raised by these results is whether support from less than half of those surveyed gives the association the "membership mandate" it has striven for since the leadership changes of the mid-1990s.

One of PDI's strongest proponents, Steve Cadenelli, CGCS at Cape Cod National GC in Brewster, Mass., agreed that it wasn't a landslide, but suggests that a change of this magnitude rarely has unanimous support. "Certainly we'd like to have a mandate, but I think 40 percent to 50 percent is a pretty good start," he says.

Cadenelli also wasn't surprised by the level of opposition. "We're asking people to meet a standard they've never had to reach before," he says.

Jim Black, a Class A member at Twin Shields GC in Dunkirk, Md., probably reflects the sentiments of many who oppose the initiative.

"I'm not so much specifically concerned with PDI, but I'm just generally dissatisfied with GCSAA," he says. "They focus too much attention on the big-budget certified guys at private clubs and not enough on the average guys at public courses like mine."

Black adds that he's concerned about the association's "obsession" with the image of the superintendent.

"I don't need someone in Kansas worrying about my

image," he says. "I work hard, and I'm proud of what I do. As far as I'm concerned, my image is the person I am 24 hours a day, not just when I'm on the job."

One respondent who originally said he opposed PDI has changed his mind since the survey — sort of. Craig Conner of Summit Chase CC in Snellville, Ga., decided to vote with his Georgia GCSA chapter in support of the proposal.

"I've learned some more about it and found out how much easier they've made it to get educational points," he says. "It's always been so difficult to get into the classes you needed (at the national conference). Now, I'd get five hours for the chapter meeting I just attended."

Conner may be among many who, once they finally learn full details of the final proposal, decide to give it their support. He doubts, however, that it will have the desired effect of bringing owners over to "our side."

"I don't think owners will ever really recognize us for what we are," he says.

"We're still pretty much viewed as hired help and the expectations keep growing. That's something I'd like to see GCSAA do something about."

Is it likely that the large number (one-third) of undecided will suddenly make up their minds to oppose the proposal? No one we talked to seems to believe so.

Nor had (at press time) any chapters confirmed that they planned to vote against the bylaw changes, while several individuals told us that their chapters had voted in favor.

So is this the "done deal" that some have suggested?

"The only thing that's a done deal is that our education programs are being reformatted to better meet member needs," Cadenelli says. "Everything else is up to the delegates in February." ■

— Pat Jones

If PDI passes, will it be good or bad for the profession?



Wanted: More Workers

What is the biggest challenge you face in your job?



*Irrigation/Ownership issues
Ownership Issues
Resources
Unrealistic Owner Expectations

Ron Ross, CGCS of Quarry Oaks GC in scenic Ashland, Neb., recently lamented about the difficulty of finding employees to work on his crew. When the unemployment rate is low and your course is located about 30 miles from a metropolitan area, it's difficult to attract potential workers, Ross says.

A whopping 58 percent of superintendents participating in our Superintendent State of the Industry Survey agreed with Ross that labor is the biggest challenge they face in their jobs. The second-biggest challenge is the weather, according to 23 percent of superintendents in the survey. Ten percent note that unrealistic golfer expectations is their biggest challenge.

Since other businesses, such as fast-food restaurants, offer employees better wages and benefits, the golf course maintenance industry has problems attracting laborers.

"We've had a lot of turnover the past few years," says John Cummings, superintendent for Berry Hills CC in Charleston, W.Va. "Our entry-level pay rate is less than some fast-food restaurants."

Keith Ihms, superintendent of Bent Tree CC in Dallas, says his golf course upped pay rates from \$5.50 to \$6.50 an hour this year to better compete for employees with fast-food eateries and car-wash operations, which are paying up to \$8 an hour.

"We had to make major adjustments with our budget to be competitive," Ihms says. "We also put a 401k plan in place. We're looking at

how we can entice employees to work here."

Cummings says another problem is that there aren't a lot of skilled employees available. "I hate having a \$5.75-an-hour employee running a \$40,000 fairway mower," he adds.

But superintendents realize they must hire unskilled workers and train them because of the shortage of employees. That includes Cummings, who says he's hoping to introduce a better pay package in 2001 to attract more help.

Ihms notes that a government crackdown on illegal Hispanic laborers reduced the labor pool in the Dallas area. Many Hispanic laborers have been shown the door because they don't have the proper documentation to work in the States. "The timing is difficult because the labor force is already small," says Ihms, noting that he's helping some of his Hispanic employees obtain proper documentation.

Bruce Rickert, CGCS at Medford Village CC in Medford Lakes, N.J., says weather and unrealistic golfer expectations combine to present him with his biggest challenge. Rickert explains that golfers underestimate the weather's impact on his course and therefore expect first-rate conditions every day. For instance, a golfer doesn't understand that a half-inch of rain will slow the greens, and a superintendent can't do anything about it, Rickert points out.

"I get discouraged with golfers," he adds. "The overall conditions of golf have improved dramatically over the years. There's more money going into maintenance, but [golfers] don't understand that." ■

— Larry Aylward