

especially roughs. Symptoms include leaf lesions with a tan center and an outer margin of brown. "It looks a lot like brown patch lesions when you first take a glance at it," Clarke notes.

On cool-season grasses, such as perennial ryegrass, the leaves appear twisted or wilted. This is where gray leaf spot can trick superintendents. "At that stage, it looks a lot like drought stress," Clarke says.

A superintendent, most likely, would then water the grass — but watering only exacerbates the disease, Clarke notes.

"You have to get down on your hands and knees and look for lesions (to identify the disease)," Clarke says.

The leaf lesions become covered with pear-shaped spores causing the blades to take on a gray, felt-like appearance. Hence, the name gray leaf spot.

Gray leaf spot thrives in warm temperatures from 70 to 80 degrees. It also prospers during warm nights.

#### Combat and control

While there's little research on gray leaf spot control, Clarke says there are management practices that superintendents



A turf consultant inspects a fairway damaged by gray leaf spot.

have used with various degrees of success, such as:

- Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization, which will intensify the disease.
- Don't water in the evening hours if the disease is active.
- Avoid use of plant growth regulators or herbicides in July and August.
- Mow when turf is dry and remove clippings.

Clarke says fungicides, such as Heritage (from Zeneca Professional Products), 3336 (from Cleary Chemical) and Compass (from Novartis) are also effective when applied in late July or early August.

Girardi says a superintendent's management of gray leaf spot may depend on course location. If you're in the transition zone — where gray leaf spot is most ravaging — you may have to use a regimented chemical spray program to combat it.

But if you're in an area where gray leaf spot is not as much a problem, like Connecticut and the Northeast, you can be prudent with chemical applications and concentrate on overseeding. ■

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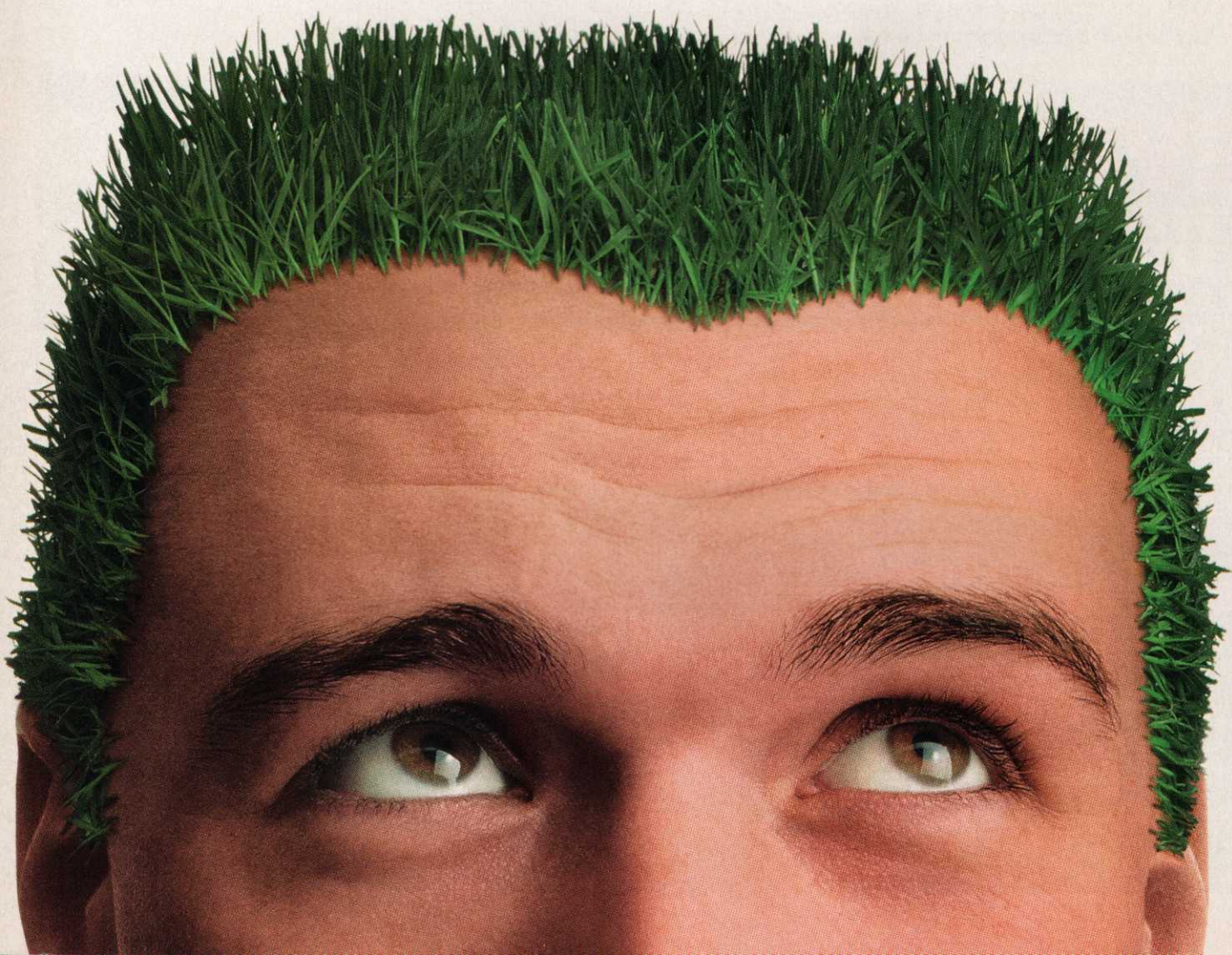
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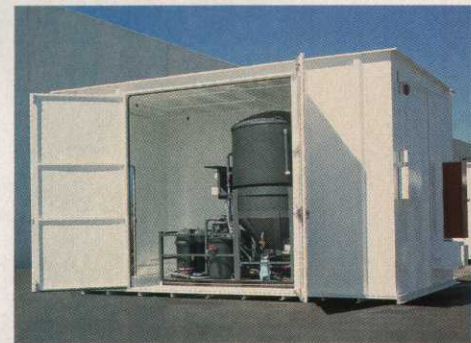
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**W**hy would we make a political squabble within an association our cover story? Because, quite simply, the Professional Development Initiative has the potential to reshape the employment future of every superintendent in the United States.

First, a little history. Six years ago, the GCSAA membership slapped down a radical attempt by the association's leadership to eliminate the chapter delegates system — among other things — and give substantially more power to the Board of Directors and staff in Lawrence (which included yours truly, at the time).

Under the committed leadership of then-president Randy Nichols, a new broom swept the old HQ regime out and a new member-friendly team led by Steve Mona was installed.

Many issues faced the new leadership team in Lawrence, but none loomed larger than the growing need for new membership standards. Basically, the question came down to this: How can we claim that GCSAA members are better than other superintendents when any schmuck with three years' experience and \$250 in his or her pocket can get a gold card? If we want to be perceived as professionals and be treated and paid commensurately, shouldn't we have higher standards than that?

Thus was born yet another committee, the Membership Standards Resource Group, which spent thousands of hours (and lots of money on consultants) to study the issue and recommend a course of action. What emerged was a proposal to enact a strong set of standards that revolve around a college

degree and a complex, competency-based continuing-education requirement. When details of the proposal were announced last fall, a trickle of discontent started to appear in postings on the "Talking it Over" forum on the GCSAA Web site.

That trickle turned into a flood of viewpoints, both for and against, over the past few months. At times, the exchange of these electronic messages has been a marvelous example of professional discourse between reasonable people who happen to disagree about an issue. At other times, it has been downright nasty and personal.

What does Golfdom think about PDI?

Those of you expecting me to issue an opinion will be

disappointed. My opinion is that I'm not a superintendent — and I don't get a vote.

Instead, we asked more than a dozen different superintendents to express their views on both sides of the question. We felt it was important to present a balanced, unbiased story based on your opinions, not ours.

Whichever side you take, I hope you agree the debate over this issue is a sure sign of a vital and healthy profession. Could you imagine plumbers or pilots having this type of argument about standards?

Although some of the discussion has been heated, it has been, for the most part, civil. A decent percentage of members are passionately interested in the issue, not because of how it will impact them, but how it will shape the profession in the future.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "Vigorous disagreement feeds the soil upon which democracy grows."

TJ would love the great PDI debate. ■

*The discussion of PDI begins on page 38. Also see page 40.*

# PDI: Pretty Damn Interesting

BY PAT JONES, PUBLISHER/EDITOR





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# PDI's

By Dave Brandon



Who's driving this and why?

# Potential Pitfalls

Here's a hypothetical situation: An employer or headhunter seeking a superintendent calls the GCSAA. The prospective employer is then asked to answer a questionnaire specifying the needs for the position. GCSAA enters this information into its database and a list of candidates pops out of the computer.

Sound good? Maybe, except that you won't be on that list unless you're a Class A or certified member. And no matter how many years of great experience you have, if you don't meet certain formal education requirements, you'll never be on that list. This is the reality of the Professional Development Initiative.

By now, you and many more fellow superintendents are becoming aware of this initiative being set forth by GCSAA. To date, GCSAA has reportedly spent nearly a million dollars for the funding of this research and analysis. Many of the benefits put forth in the PDI are valid. But upon closer examination, the initiative includes potential pitfalls that could exclude many capable superintendents from achieving their professional goals.

The main drive behind the initiative is education. Who can object to that? Education is the cornerstone of our profession. But don't assume that opposing PDI is equivalent to opposing the educational avenues it could open. Instead, the opposition's concerns are primarily about the need for the full disclosure of the costs of the program as well as how and why the initiative is being proposed.

Before you read on, promise you'll do this: Take the time to investigate what's

being proposed, and make up your own mind and communicate your view to your local chapter delegate. On the surface, this initiative is being packaged and sold to you in ways that may seem irresistible. But we the opposition believe the more you find out, the more you'll agree with some of our concerns. For example:

## The degree dilemma

New superintendents who hope to obtain Class A status or certification will be required to have two- or four-year degrees. The two-year degree could be in turf or a related field, but the four-year degree could be in any discipline. Under the proposal, current members that haven't achieved a degree (or certificate) will be grandfathered into the new Class A status.

The grandfathering clause is not clear on how long this "amnesty" offer is available. Suppose, for example, you're a grandfathered Class A member without a degree and you lose your job or pursue another non-superintendent career within golf for a while. You would be reclassified as an inactive member. When you were ready to take a superintendent's position, you would never be able to attain a level above Class B unless you returned to school for a degree.

What's more, there is the fundamental question, "Does a degree necessarily make one superintendent better than another?" Look around at the next chapter meeting and then decide for yourself.

## Branding

Those that have the desired criteria will be considered a "branded" Class A member and will be actively promoted and

*Continued on page 101*



# Positive About PDI

By Ray Davies

**O**ur profession is tremendously rewarding. Every day, we see Mother Nature work miracles. The grass, the trees and flowers, the sunrise, the wildlife — it's a wonderful feeling to have the course respond to our efforts.

But it's also a challenging and sometimes frustrating profession. Long hours, lower-than-deserved pay, lack of recognition and mediocre job security have plagued our business for too long. How many superintendents do you know who have lost their positions because of bad weather, a poor relationship with the boss or player expectations that exceed the facility's budget?

I am among many superintendents who believe that we can address those challenges and frustrations by taking our destiny into our own hands. The question is how to enhance the image of our profession when no clear standards exist. At least part of the answer lies with the GCSAA's Professional Development Initiative.

Although you may not have heard much about PDI until recently, its origins date back three years. To examine questions of standards, GCSAA's Board organized the Membership Standards Resource Group in 1997. The group realized that before standards could be recommended, we needed to answer key questions, among them:

- What tasks do superintendents perform?
- What do employers value in superintendents and what weaknesses do they perceive in the profession?
- What educational needs do superintendents have?
- How well is GCSAA meeting those needs?

Here's what we learned:

- All superintendents, no matter what size facility — public or private — perform the

same core tasks. We hire, fire, train, schedule, review, purchase, approve invoices, irrigate, fertilize and perform other duties.

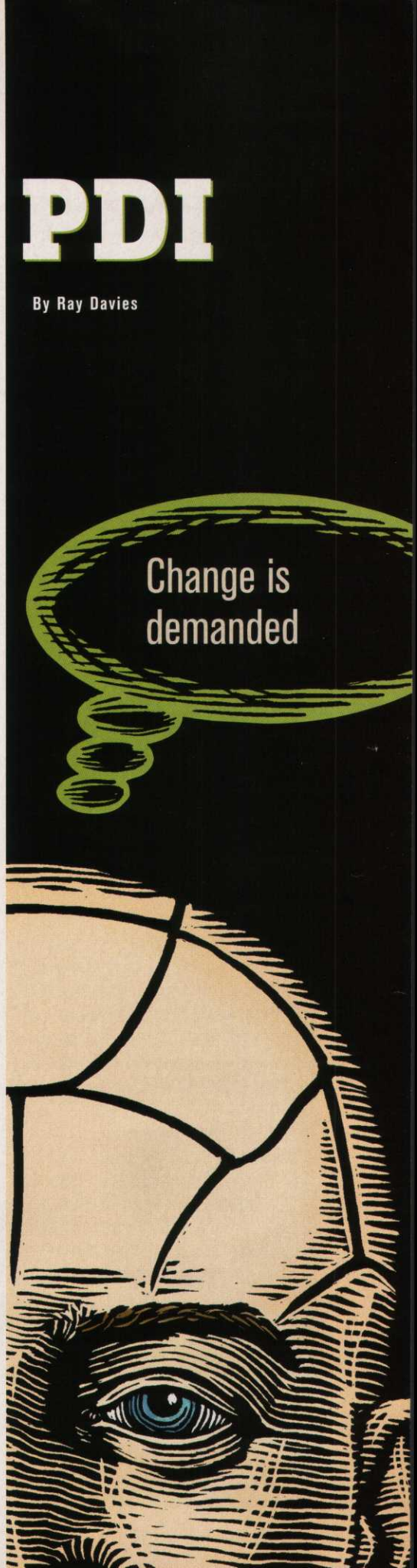
- Differences enter the equation when proficiency is considered. For example, some superintendents perform significant project management functions and others do not. Therefore, individual courses need to determine how proficient a superintendent must be in each competency.
- Employers do not necessarily understand what we do for their courses. This leaves them feeling vulnerable because they don't know if we are simply making excuses about the course conditions.
- Employers believe we have outstanding technical skills and that we work hard.
- Employers highly value college degrees.
- Employers think we don't grasp the business end of golf and make capital improvement requests beyond the ability of the business to support. We may produce great conditions, but employers fear we don't manage costs well.
- Employers believe we don't like to talk to the customers because our communication skills are often weak.
- Too many of us are unskilled in basic computer use, such as utilizing spreadsheet and word processor software.
- We would not make good general managers because we prefer to work early morning hours and go home by 2 p.m. (their words, not mine.) We do not deal well with confrontations with customers and lack effective people skills.
- We do not always manage safety training and other worker issues that leave employers open to lawsuits and workers compensation claims.

Research also suggests that our current education program needs to be fine-tuned to address the following perception issues:

- GCSAA's educational programs didn't address most non-technical tasks.

- GCSAA's educational program was

*Continued on page 101*



Change is demanded

# Squaring Off on PDI

To supplement our primary Pro and Con editorials, *Golfdom* asked other superintendents around the country to give us their thoughts on some key questions about PDI. Those responses follow:

## PDI in a Nutshell

Here is a thumbnail sketch of the complex proposal known as PDI. Note that several aspects of PDI impact member classification and will require changes in the GCSAA bylaws. The bylaws vote is scheduled for the 2001 Annual Meeting in Dallas.

- The stated purpose of PDI is to "improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the professional superintendent." The goals include increased salaries, better job security, recognition, opportunities and "branded" credentials that can be sold to employers. (Source: GCSAA)

- PDI would require new Class A and CGCS members to have a two-year turf degree or four-year degree in any subject. Requires member approval of a bylaws change.

- All current Class A members who don't meet the degree criteria would be "grandfathered" to retain their status.

- Class A members would have to complete a self-assessment every three years to develop a "competency profile" to ensure they meet a minimum standard of qualification and to map out educational and career needs. Also requires bylaws change.

- GCSAA will establish the HR Web, a database of the competency assessments, to help superintendents manage their careers and (optionally) participate in employment searches.

Attendees in New Orleans will have their chance to learn more about PDI and voice an opinion at the Town Hall Meeting following the GCSAA elections, 10:30 a.m. (time approximate), Saturday, Feb. 17.

Otherwise, visit [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org) or contact the association at 800-472-7878 for more information on PDI.

## Keith Ihms, CGCS

BENT TREE CC, DALLAS

### *Why do you think PDI is being proposed?*

This program was initially proposed to enhance the professional image of superintendents, as well as increase the marketability of Class A superintendents to potential employers. As a side benefit, PDI has also given GCSAA an opportunity to review our educational programs, from content to instructors, and make improvements as needed.

### *Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?*

I support the concept, but until all details have been worked through, I can't comment on any possible revisions at this time. There is still much work and discussion to be done.

### *Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?*

The key ingredient to the program's success centers on the competency-based Performance Assessment Models. These may be difficult to complete and agree upon. In addition, some type of validation system will need to be developed which has some backbone and is workable.

### *If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on the PROFESSION in 20 years?*

It will increase superintendents' status in the golf business, make branded Class A superintendents more marketable and increase the compensation of qualified superintendents.

### *If PDI is passed as written, what impact will it have had on GCSAA in 20 years?*

GCSAA will become an even more recognized player in golf than it is

today. Anyone who wishes to be involved in golf course management as a career will want and need to be a Class A member of GCSAA. And even more important, no golfing facility will want to be managed by anyone other than a GCSAA Class A superintendent.

## Sean A. Hoolehan, CGCS

WILDHORSE RESORT GC,  
PENDLETON, ORE.

### *Why do you think PDI is being proposed?*

The PDI came out of the desire to create standards for superintendents. It seemed to spin out of discussions held at chapter delegates meetings. There always seemed to be some dissatisfaction that the majority of Class A superintendents attend classes, go to conferences and stay up on new developments while a guy at a nine-hole par-3 course for three years could simply pay \$250 and, voila, he is also a Class A superintendent.

### *Do you support it as written, with some revisions or oppose it outright? Why? How would you revise it?*

I support it with revisions. I support it because it reflects what the majority of superintendents already do. I don't like the self-assessments or competency tests. This is not necessary for minimum standards and would fit better in the certification program. Class A members already are getting a formal education and getting continuing education. We give them a verifiable credential with no added cost.

### *Which, if any, provisions seem to be the most problematic?*

At first, it appears to be the degree re-

*Continued on page 42*