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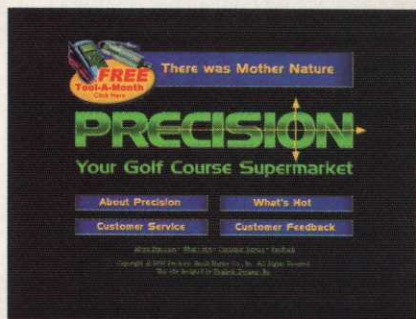
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The lure of e-commerce



precisionusa.com —

Precision Small Engine Co., which recently upgraded its site, offers golf course equipment replacement parts, specialized products and other equipment for sale.



ppgolf.com —

The "pgc" stands for Professional Golf Commerce and focuses on facilitating business-to-business electronic commerce for the golf market, according to the company. It was formed to design, develop and market an e-commerce solution enabling PGA pros and superintendents to buy online from manufacturers, distributors and merchandisers.



xsag.com —

This site offers a forum for buying and selling agricultural products such as chemicals, seed and fertilizer. It handles two types of auctions: A forward auction, where a seller lists product for sale and potential buyers bid against each other at higher and higher prices until a winner is determined; and a name-your-price listing, where a buyer lists the product he or she wants to buy and allows potential sellers to bid for the business. Look for xsturf.com soon.

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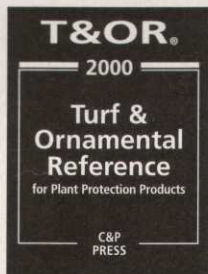
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"Our main objective has always been to serve superintendents by connecting them to a community of their peers with the vision of conducting business online," says Mike Scott, Golfsat's founder and CEO.

"We're establishing connections with manufacturers and distributors and fleshing out the buying process with superintendents," adds Scott, noting that Golfsat's e-commerce segment will be functional worldwide by September. "Crawling before you walk is vital."

Don't think that building an e-commerce site is a matter of spending an afternoon at the computer. Andy Masciarella, president of Pompano Beach, Fla.-based Precision Small Engine Co., has spent more than two years and \$100,000 refining his company's Web site, www.precisionusa.com. Precision supplies replacement parts for golf course equipment and offers more about 77,000 parts for sale online.

"Our new enhanced site is much easier to use and navigate," Masciarella says of the revised site, which debuted in April.

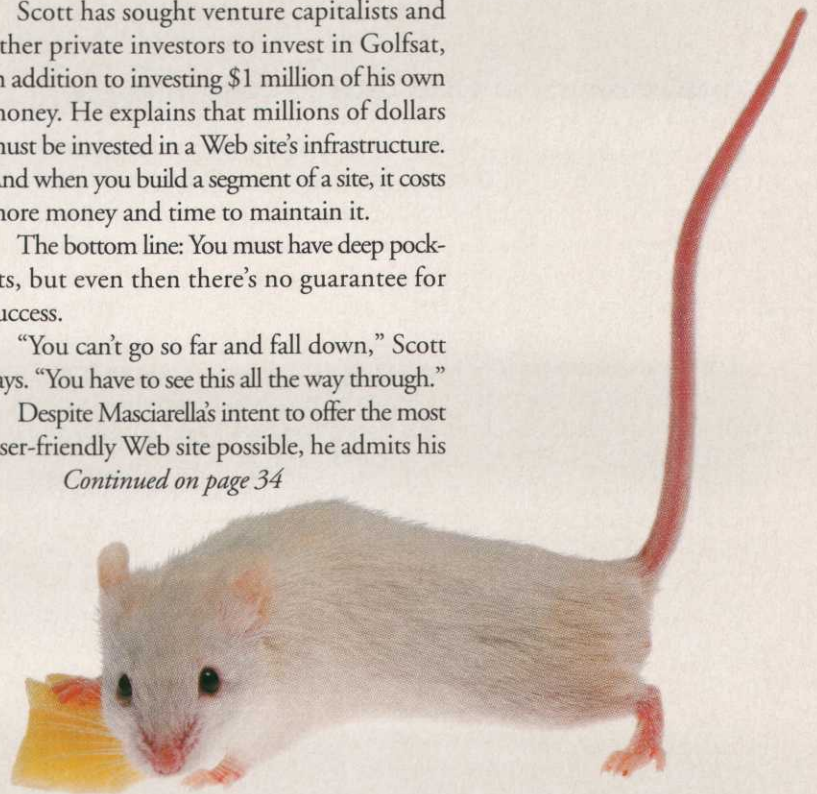
Scott has sought venture capitalists and other private investors to invest in Golfsat, in addition to investing \$1 million of his own money. He explains that millions of dollars must be invested in a Web site's infrastructure. And when you build a segment of a site, it costs more money and time to maintain it.

The bottom line: You must have deep pockets, but even then there's no guarantee for success.

"You can't go so far and fall down," Scott says. "You have to see this all the way through."

Despite Masciarella's intent to offer the most user-friendly Web site possible, he admits his

Continued on page 34



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www.golfdom.com **Golfdom 33**

e-controversy

The golf industry's entry into electronic commerce is not without controversy.

There's enough drama going on to rival an afternoon soap opera.

GCSAA is at the center of the fuss. In January, the association sent a letter signed by Robert A. Shively, senior director of corporate marketing, to its vendor members informing them that GCSAA would soon be developing a business-to-business e-commerce Web site. The letter advised vendors not to team with other e-commerce vendors until they could see GCSAA's plans.

"We encourage you to wait to see what GCSAA has to offer ... so that you can effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the vendors who perform this type of service," the letter said.

At least two of those competing vendors — *www.golfsat.com* and *www.green-trac.com* — are also GCSAA's customers. They advertised in the association's magazine and bought space at its trade show in New Orleans.

Despite its tone, GCSAA's letter wasn't intended to be competitive toward Golf-sat or Greentrac, said Julian Arredondo, GCSAA's chief financial officer, who's helping direct the association's e-commerce efforts.

Scott Woodhead, GCSAA president and CGCS of Valley View GC in Bozeman, Mont., says the letter was sent to industry partners to simply let them know that

GCSAA was exploring e-commerce possibilities.

(Arredondo also noted that GCSAA has several customers/competitors, including Golf-dom and other publications, which compete with the association's magazine but also exhibit at its trade show.)

Despite the letter, Arredondo told Golf-dom that the association hasn't decided whether it will implement a strategy where vendors will sell their products and equipment on GCSAA's Web site. Arredondo noted that GCSAA is already practicing e-commerce and

"I was angry about it. But what can you do?"

— John Mueller,
GolfSolutions

sells books and videos at its site, *gcsaa.org*.

"We meant the letter to say that we're looking at the expanded implications of the 'Net,' Arredondo says. "We will have expanded e-commerce on our site. We just don't know what it will include."

GCSAA has been questioned by suppliers and members for its possible role in e-commerce. They think the association, which sells advertisements to many suppliers, would be off limits if it were to then pit those advertisers against each for sales on its e-commerce site while collecting a percentage from each transaction.

Arredondo said that GCSAA hasn't ruled out a partnership with an industry dot-com player. GCSAA personnel have already met with leaders from other e-commerce sites to discuss possible partnerships — which sparked more controversy.

John Mueller, founder of Austin, Texas-based *www.golfsolutions.com*, says that GCSAA officials met with him last summer to discuss a possible working relationship. *golfsolutions.com*, one of the industry's first e-commerce sites, debuted in April 1999. Mueller says GCSAA officials picked his brain for ideas and showed him the door.

"I was angry about it," Mueller says. "But what can you do? That's business."

Arredondo says he wasn't aware of Mueller's hard feelings.

"I don't want to speculate," Arredondo says. "As far as I know, we have a good relationship with him."

Mike Scott, Golfsat's CEO, says he met with GCSAA officials last year about a possible partnership.

"We went way down the road with GCSAA," Scott says. "But at the end of the day, GCSAA decided it didn't want something like *golfsat.com* coming in and having that kind of impact on the marketplace. GCSAA leaders think that role ought to be theirs."

— Larry Aylward

Continued from page 33

audience is sparse. Precision's online business comprises only 1 percent of the company's current sales — a distant third behind the phone and the fax.

Faith is another vital component when you attempt to obtain online success. If you're an e-commerce provider, there's no room to hedge. Masciarella isn't.

"I feel good about this," he says. "When the time comes, we're going to be way ahead of our competition."

Why buy and sell online?

Mike Lukz, equipment manager at Boca Rio GC in Boca Raton, Fla., says he's obsessed with computer technology. So it's no surprise that Lukz met his wife online and prefers to purchase most of the course's equipment online.

"I have all but one of my vendors trained so I can buy online," Lukz says, noting that he simply e-mails them his orders.

Tom Walker picks up the phone when he places a product order. But the superintendent of Toledo, Ohio-based Inverness Club would rather be like Lukz and purchase items with the point and click of his computer's mouse. Walker is tired of calling salespeople and getting their answering machines. He's tired of being put on hold and being transferred to the back of a warehouse.

There are other reasons that Walker favors e-commerce. When he isn't sure what brand of a product he wants, he'd rather visit one Web site to view his options rather than go to 10 Web sites and compare the products. If he needs to reorder eight different products, he can go to one Web site for one-stop shopping.

"If I can go to one site and get a broad representation of the products out there, that's what I'll do," Walker says. "It's like going to the supermarket as opposed to going to six different stores."

Inman believes busy superintendents would find it invaluable to buy online if it meant saving time. The industry's dot-com players realize many superintendents don't like spending a lot of time talking to salespeople, especially when they're reordering products that they already know they need. The dot-com players also know that some superintendents relish the chance to purchase supplies online at all hours, especially at 5 a.m. when a majority of

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them begin their days.

"It's another tool for time management," Salinetti says. "You can (buy online) before work, during work or after work. You can do it in a comfortable environment and at your own pace. It's an opportunity to make thoughtful purchases."

E-commerce, however, is not without its drawbacks. While some think it would be great not to talk to salespeople, others view e-commerce as an impersonal way to do business, especially when they have good relationships with business partners and enjoy engaging in small talk on the phone before talking business.

Masciarella says he used to do business strictly by phone with an equipment buyer at the Pebble Beach Co. Now the buyer purchases everything from Precision online.

"I used to talk to him every other day on the phone, and I had a personal relationship with him," Masciarella says, admitting that he misses their conversations. "Now that he does everything online, I never talk to him."

Mueller estimates that only 10 percent to 25 percent of superintendents are ready to buy some products online. Those include commodity products like fertilizers or hole cutters — things that superintendents don't have to see to buy. Most superintendents will still want to kick the tires of \$50,000 mower before they purchase it. You can't do that online.

Tom Prall, manager of e-business for Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co., admits that cyberspace offers no replacement for test driving a state-of-the-art fairway mower.

"There's nothing like a demonstration," he says.

Dazed and confused

With the influx of e-commerce Web sites, where will superintendents know where to go if they want to buy online? Are there too many "stores"?

"There has to be some confusion among superintendents at this stage of development," Scott admits.

Inman says he would be confused about where to shop if he had his choice of e-commerce sites. But he would select a site if he knew who or what was behind it. For instance, if GCSAA had a Web site along with 10 others, Inman would select the association's site because he's familiar with the organization's name.

Salinetti believes competition between e-

commerce sites is a good thing.

"The best sites will survive by providing the best service and scope of products," he says. "Superintendents will benefit from that."

Vendors, too, are wondering whether or not to jump in the e-commerce pool. And if they do, should they sell products on their own Web sites, team with a dot.com player or both? "We're not involved with any third-party sites to sell our equipment, but we're not closing the door on it," Prall says.

More superintendents realize they must open their minds to this newfangled way of doing business, whether they like it or not.

Mueller believes vendors like Deere would be better off selling their equipment through several sites, even though the sites compete.

"If they start signing exclusive deals with one of us, they're shooting themselves in the foot," Mueller says.

e-future

While it isn't as cyber cerebral as other industries, the golf course maintenance industry certainly is no dummy when it comes to the computer world and buying online. E-commerce has arrived in a big way with a number of players, and more superintendents realize they must open their minds to this newfangled way of doing business, whether they like or not. But it's anybody's guess as to how e-commerce will progress in the industry.

Mueller predicts online buying will grow with the addition of more college-educated individuals to the profession. "They love using the Internet," he adds.

The 52-year-old Salinetti, while not of the 20-something and 30-something Internet generation, insists that grasping the economic ideals of e-commerce is simply a matter of keeping up with the times.

"I plan on being around the industry for awhile, and *this* is part of the game," Salinetti says of e-commerce. "It's going to change the way the vast majority of superintendents do business in the next five years." ■

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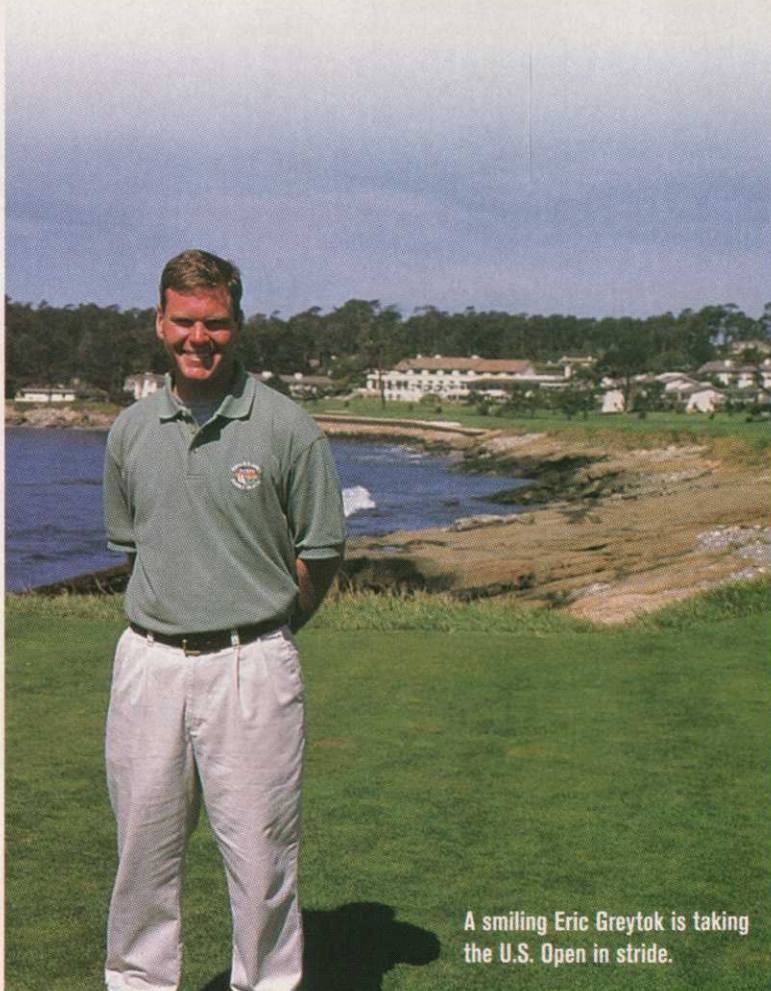
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Baptism

BY Fire

27-year-old **Eric Greytok** was appointed Pebble Beach's new superintendent – just in time for the pressure-packed 100th U.S. Open



RAIN BIRD

A smiling Eric Greytok is taking the U.S. Open in stride.

Eric Greytok is getting the rock-star treatment — and he doesn't even play guitar.

But because Greytok plays the role of new superintendent at Pebble Beach Golf Links, site of the 100th U.S. Open this month, he's discovering that the media wants to shine its sparkling spotlight on him as if he were Bruce Springsteen.

**BY LARRY AYLWARD,
MANAGING EDITOR**

It's two months before the circus is due in town, and Greytok is already besieged by the media. It's shortly before 6 a.m. on an April morning in Pebble Beach, Calif., and Greytok is on the phone talking turf and answering what's-it-like questions from a reporter in the eastern time zone. Welcome to the jungle, Eric.

The soft-spoken Greytok politely answers the questions, but you can tell he could do without the fanfare.

"I don't like the limelight," he says diplomatically. "I'd rather go about my job. The media is starting to call, and that's fine. I understand that comes with the job. But if I had it my way ..."

If he had his way, he'd do his job quietly and with little attention. But *this* is the U.S. Open and the circumstances are a bit different. Paul Jett, certified superintendent at Pinehurst Resort and CC's No. 2 course, says he felt like a celebrity when the U.S. Open came to North Carolina last year.

"Nobody clued me into the fact that the media would be this overwhelming," Jett said. "I don't remember a Major where the superintendent and his staff received as much publicity as we did."

But Pebble Beach might take that cake this year. The media has several story angles to explore, including the 100th playing of the tournament and its romantic return to a course — Pebble Beach hosted the U.S. Open in 1972, 1982 and 1992 — where so many dramatic moments in tournament history have occurred.

And then there's Greytok's saga, which is an intriguing story. The 27-year-old was hired as an assistant superintendent to then-superintendent Mark Michaud in November. But after Michaud resigned from Pebble Beach around the beginning of 2000, the "kid" with a 1995 bachelor's degree in turfgrass management from Penn State University was appointed to the post just five months before the U.S. Open. A baptism by fire? Try an inferno.

The modest Greytok, however, brushes off any talk of pressure and quickly gives credit to Michaud, now the superintendent at Shinnecock Hills GC in Southampton, N.Y.

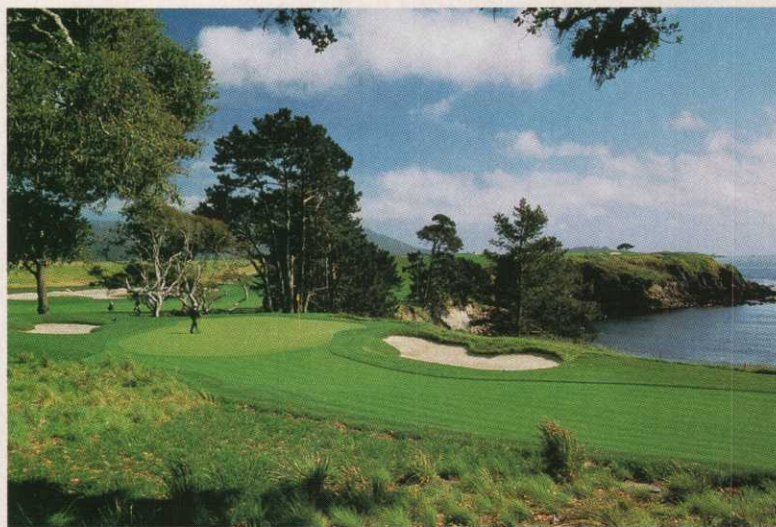
"The program he had going here was a great," Greytok says of Michaud, who spent seven years at Pebble Beach. "I would be foolish to change anything."

Even demanding talk from USGA chairman David Fay doesn't rattle Greytok. "The mantra of the U.S. Open is that it has long been known as the world's toughest golf tournament, and we don't want to give that up," Fay insists.

Greytok responds, "What Michaud did the last five years has ensured this will be (the world's toughest golf tournament)."

In mid-April, Greytok said the course was nearly ready, except for fine-tuning. He and his crew were moving cart paths and building bridges to contain the throng that would invade the course for four days.

Even if he's feeling a bit of pressure, the



PEBBLE BEACH CO.

Philadelphia-raised Greytok is accustomed to it. His entire career, while short, has been filled with challenges. Fresh out of Penn State, he went to work for superintendent Paul B. Latshaw at the prestigious Merion GC in Ardmore, Pa. Then Greytok worked under the heralded Paul R. Latshaw, Paul B.'s father, at Riviera CC in Pacific Palisades, Calif., and Congressional CC in Bethesda, Md.

Greytok says the Latshaws taught him a lot more than agronomics. "I learned how to be a businessman and how to attain a professional image," he says.

To some, Greytok may be too young to be staging the prestigious U.S. Open. But the age thing doesn't trouble him.

"None of the too-young talk has been directed toward me, but I know it's being said," Greytok says. "It doesn't bother me because I know I can do the job."

Continued on page 40

The Jack Nicklaus-designed new 5th hole, which opened last year, has performed well.

Baptism By Fire

RAIN BIRD



Pebble's Watertight Irrigation Plan

By Jason Schmaderer

Eric Greytok, superintendent of Pebble Beach Golf Links, describes himself as a perfectionist. That's probably a good thing because near-perfect playing conditions are expected on the legendary course under Greytok's care for the playing of the 100th U.S. Open in mid-June.

Greytok says he and his crew must manage precisely two important factors at Pebble Beach - the amount of water they put down and chemical applications. Of the former, Greytok says he and his staff take irrigation practices seriously, especially when the weather at Pebble Beach can be foggy and wet one day, and 70 degrees with 30 mile-an-hour winds the next.

"My philosophy is to keep the course fairly dry, but not to the point where the grass will suffer," Greytok says.

Mark Thomas, Pebble Beach's irrigation technician, says the Rain Bird irrigation system the course installed five years ago offers him the flexibility to adapt to Greytok's mandate, as well as the challenging microclimates he must deal with on the course.

"The holes on the coastline are a lot different than the ones that are inland and protected with trees," Thomas says. "So we rely on our system's flexibility to give us the ability to isolate areas, zones, station sizes and even individ-



PEBBLE BEACH CO.

ual heads. If we're irrigating a slope with southern exposure, I can change that particular station to water more than the rest of the fairway. It's important to have the ability to fine-tune because we're dealing with a number of different microclimates that may vary significantly from day to day."

Thomas, in his 13th year at Pebble Beach, prefers manual probing to get a good feel for

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Greytok's age doesn't bother Ted Horton, Pebble Beach Co.'s vice president of resource management, who appointed Greytok to superintendent. Horton describes Greytok as a gamer — someone you would want to be at the plate with the bases loaded in the ninth inning.

"People say he's young, but I tell them, 'Gosh, I remember in my career how wonderful it was to get a head start when I was a young person,'" Horton says. "I'm not going to let age frighten us.

"(Greytok) has a definite sense of urgency," Horton adds. "He has a willingness to take charge. He's precise and efficient."

Greytok says he has a no-bull management style, and he likes a fast and furious pace.

"I don't take 'no' for an answer," he says. "Don't ever come to me and say that something can't be done.

"I like to have a lot of things going on at the same time," he insists. "I don't like idle time."

USGA has kept Greytok and his crew busy readying the course in the association's likeness. The common denominators for all U.S. Open courses is that premiums are put

on golfers to hit their balls in the fairways and to hit the greens in regulation. Also, U.S. Open greens are traditionally firm and fast — but not too fast.

"When you have fast greens, you limit where you can set holes," Fay says. "You can't be as creative."

Horton says Pebble Beach's greens will register between 10.5 and 11 on the Stimpmeter for the tournament. "Because the greens are small and fairly undulating, the USGA doesn't want them excessively fast," he adds.

Pebble Beach, according to USGA standards, will sport tees and fairways mowed to three-eighths an inch, down

Players will notice revamped bunkers with better-packing and better-draining sand.