



“Realistically, the odds are against you. Few people who start out as superintendents end their careers as superintendents.”

Zidik agrees. He says that all the stars aligned when he joined E.H. Griffith Co., a distribution company, based in Pittsburgh, as a salesman. Just when he had reached his saturation point with the stress of being a superintendent, a sales representative for E.H. Griffith in his area retired. Zidik had used the products for years as a superintendent, so he applied for the job and got it.

“Being a superintendent really helped prepare me for this new venture,” Zidik says. “I can explain the products we offer more easily to the superintendents.”

Zidik says he would advise superintendents who want to leave the profession to research the new jobs they’re considering extensively. Sometimes, it may not be the jewel the superintendent thinks it is.

“The grass always appears greener on the other side of the fence,” Zidik says. “But that may be all it is: appearance.”

Sam Green, an agronomist for Rocky Mount, N.C.-based Aqua-Aid, followed that advice early last year and looked closely at his current position before he took it. Green wasn’t sure he wanted to stop being a superintendent, despite the headaches the job caused him. After all, he’d only been in the industry since 1993 and he’d only been at Dataw for 20 months.

So when Aqua-Aid approached him to take over its Roanoke, Va., territory, he asked company representatives for some time to make the decision. It took him six months. Green says he’s grateful to Aqua-Aid for giving him the time he needed to make his decision. Superintendents should never leap into new jobs simply because they hate their old ones, Green adds.

Continued on page 42

Seamless Transition

Continued from page 41

"I knew that making this move would be a radical step for me, and I wanted to make sure it was the right fit," Green says. "I didn't want to make an emotional decision I would later regret."

He says he understood the company culture of Aqua-Aid because he'd known the owners, Bill Eason and Bert Brace, for seven years before he joined the company in October. He had used their products extensively as the director of golf at the Dataw Island Club in Buford, S.C.

"I wanted to work for honorable men, and I wanted to work for a company with a good reputation," Green says. "Aqua-Aid had both, so when I burned out, I decided I could work for the company."

Green says it was definitely time for him to leave the superintendent profession. He had started waking up in the morning at Dataw with a sick feeling in his stomach because

the political battles he fought with members about course maintenance were so intense.

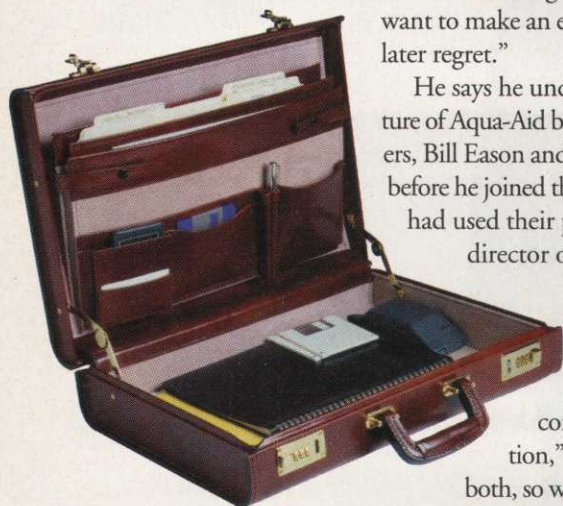
"I didn't want to go into work in the morning," Green says. "I never thought I'd get to that point. But after you're fighting the same battles day in and day out, it gets hard to work enthusiastically at it."

Not all transitions are forced by the pressures of the job, however. Gary Dorsch spent five years as a superintendent at Springbrook GC in Naperville, Ill., near Chicago. During his tenure there, he was approached several times by the Scotts Co. to become a regional sales representative. He says he didn't take the offers seriously at first, but Scotts representatives slowly persuaded him that it was something he'd be interested in doing.

Dorsch says he wasn't burnt out; he just saw the business side of the golf industry beginning to flourish. He decided that he wanted to get in on the ground floor.

"The salesperson who was calling on me always told me I had the perfect personality

Continued on page 44



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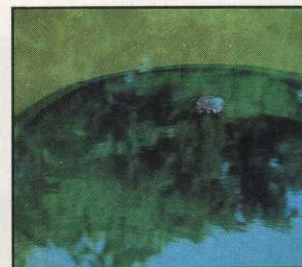


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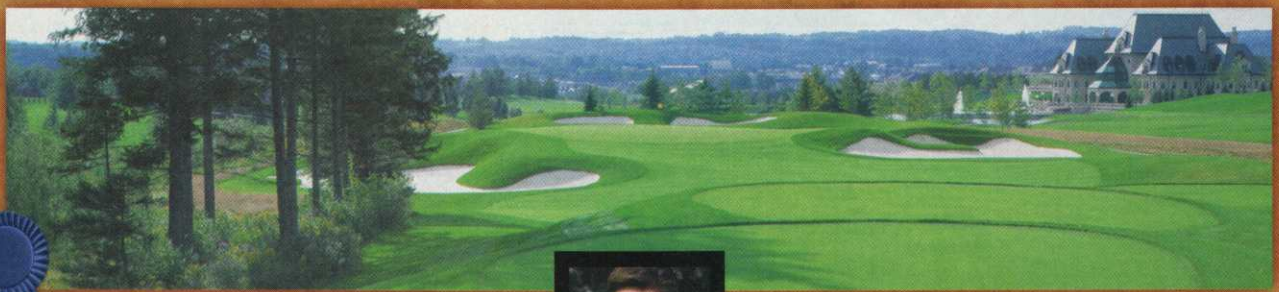


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Seamless Transition

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Continued from page 42

for sales," Dorsch says. "I thought it was the perfect time to make a move."

So Dorsch started with Scotts in 1982 and has been in sales since. He represents Professional Golf Commerce, an e-commerce vendor that will expand its offerings to include course maintenance products this year.

Dorsch's advice for superintendents is to evaluate themselves and find out what they're looking for in jobs and what they value as an employee. Once you discover those things, you can decide if a company's culture is right for you, Dorsch adds. If you can't find a company whose culture fits, Grigg says you shouldn't be afraid to start your own company.

Grigg Bros., a company Gary and his

brother Mark started five years ago, produces a line of foliar fertilizer. Last year, the business grew so large that Grigg could no longer do the job part time.

"There are niches out there that aren't being addressed," Grigg says. "If you have an idea about how to fill one, you should seize the opportunity."

Although Grigg misses working on a golf course, he says he doesn't miss the headaches that can push superintendents to the brink of despair.

"The day-to-day hassles were becoming more and more difficult to deal with," Grigg says. "I don't miss the unlimited expectations of golfers."

So next time your members complain about the brown grass on No. 14 after 10 days of 100-degree heat, don't fret. If you expand your horizons, you might just find another job that you will enjoy even more. ■

The Party's Over ...Or Is It?

By David St. John

Yesterday, you dealt with the daily demands of tending a golf course with fervor and confidence. Nothing could you bring you down — not the weather, temperature, insects, fickle members, demanding boards, scarcity of good help, budgets, equipment problems or the never-ending requirement to put on an upbeat face.

Today, however, the job is taking its toll on you. You feel the loss of youth and the pangs of age. The calls and problems that used to be challenging are now annoyances. You spend more time puzzling over decisions that used to be made in a heartbeat. There are moments during which you feel isolated and overwhelmed.

You may not realize it, but you are now an official entrant in the race between retirement and obsolescence. Some people are happy with a photo finish, but that doesn't mean you have to be.

Folks are living longer and enjoying themselves more today than ever before. The smart ones recognized the fact that they were in a race and

chose to adapt to the course and adjust their position in the field. Here are some of the things they did — and that you can do — to go the distance:

- Get a handle on your financial status by considering projected income from social security, retirement plans and investments. The degree of financial independence you can project has a lot to do with the timing of your retirement and your second career choices.

- As a superintendent, you have acquired a number of valuable skills and experiences. You've been on the firing line and become adept at crisis management. You've developed a knack for handling multiple priorities under pressure.

When you break these experiences down into their smallest components, you start to see a set of marketable and transferable skills. But when was the last time you pulled out a piece of paper and wrote these experiences down? This little exercise will help define your strengths.

- Experience and know-how are valuable commodities. You'd be amazed how much people will pay to learn what you know. Don't shrug off

the fields of teaching, consulting or even a small business opportunity.

- Sometimes second careers are influenced by hobbies. I have a friend who used to be an engineer and loved to play golf. He now runs a thriving business building custom-fitted golf clubs.

- Seek out people who have made successful career and retirement transitions and find out how they did it. Do this *before* your time comes.

The superintendent performs many of the same tasks that general managers do in other industries. Thinking of your position in these terms creates a different picture of the job itself.

Superintendents are the ultimate producers of a well-defined end result — an impeccable golfing experience that makes club members proud to support. There are plenty of alternatives to a successful retirement and/or alternate career embedded in that job description.

Dave St. John is a principal in GreenSearch, an Atlanta-based management search and human resource consulting firm. He can be contacted at info@greensearch.com.

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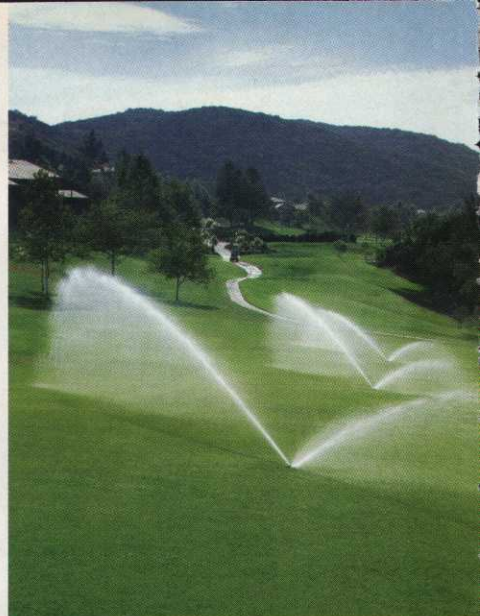
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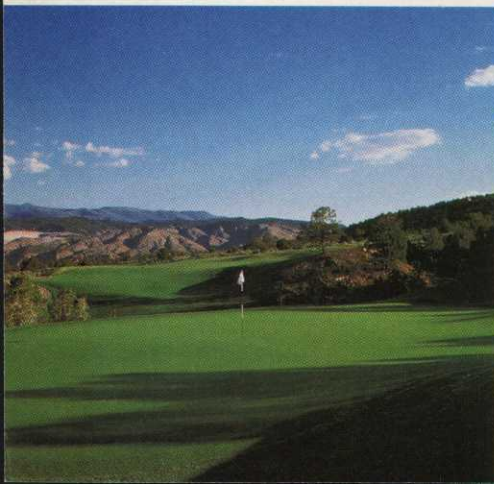
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Retrofits, Upgrades, New Construction



I'm not sure where it comes from. Maybe it's Biblical. Maybe it's Shakespearean. But we've all heard golfers cite the following quotation — "Every hole must be a thing unto itself" — without ever bothering to ask themselves why it must be so.

For years, golfers have labored under the belief that to have a respectable design, each hole must be by itself. Each hole must also be free of views of other golfers, even if it means lining the rear of a green with a straight row of spruces. What hogwash.

Still, the quotation gets repeated. So if it's not classical in origin, where did this mentality come from? Well, we can blame George Crump, who once said that one of the reasons for building Pine Valley was his desire to keep every hole free of view of any other.

Of course, that oversimplification of his philosophy blatantly ignores the fact that Crump cut down, at great expense, every tree on the property before construction. Nor does it account for the fact that he didn't replant trees to block off every hole.

But through some bizarre foray into myth-making that has turned legend into unquestioned truth, it has become fact that the world's No. 1 course is so because each hole is by itself. Unfortunately, that's the least interesting aspect of its magnificent design.

Ironically, the same golfers who want to plant trees excessively or who fight to keep the most offensive ones around, are the same golfers who sit in the locker room playing cards, oblivious to when 80-year-old Mr. Havercamp and his shriveled body walk around naked.

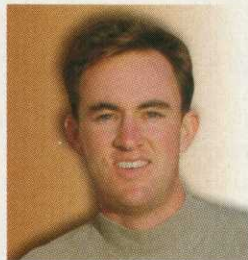
The sight of old men who bare all apparently does not offend the golfer. But the world nears its end when the same member can see Buffy Dalrymple on the eighth fairway while said member putts out on the fourth green.

For the most part, the "every hole unto itself" virus has been a fetish with golfers, though we all know of a select group of architects who have revolved master plans around the concept. You read their report and it's obsessed with closing every conceivable tree gap to satisfy the illness.

Recent activities at golf courses through-

Trees Distort Clear View of Game

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



FOR YEARS,
GOLFERS HAVE
LABORED UNDER
THE BELIEF THAT
EACH GOLF HOLE
MUST BE BY ITSELF.
WHAT HOGWASH

out America suggest that some golfers are reluctantly moving away from this obsession, however.

Thanks to the educational efforts of superintendents and architects, golfers are beginning to understand that it's not a good enough reason to plant trees to be used just as framing pieces or as a preventative measure from seeing other golfers.

Let's not minimize the damage that the obsession has already done. It comes after too many greens have died, too many superintendents have been fired and too many architects slaughtered for daring to suggest the removal of problematic or unattractive trees. But there is progress being made.

Some courses are still headed in the wrong direction by planting unnecessary trees instead of removing them. But most others are finally allowing superintendents to take down the nursery of willows that border the rear of the green. Fairways are returning to areas previously covered by trees.

Holes are no longer things unto themselves, and the game is not only surviving, it's improving when the trees are removed. Other mature trees, previously out of view, are now being appreciated. Turf is allowed to grow again. Golf can actually be played as it was meant to be.

Best of all, golfers are learning that the sun will rise in the East and set in the West even if you remove a few trees.

Now, if we could just get golfers to be as outraged about old and decrepit naked men strolling around the locker room as they are when trees are removed, we'd really be making progress.

Geoff Shackelford will be signing his new book, "Alister MacKenzie's Cypress Point Club," at the GCSAA convention in Dallas. He can be reached at geoffshackelford@aol.com.

Last Call

It's about security, value and marketing



BY DAVID DOWNING II, CGCS

In discussions with other superintendents, I've heard concerns about job security, job value and lack of marketing of superintendents as professionals. GCSAA members wanted to know what the association could do for them in these areas. That's why the Professional Development Initiative was born.

The association, through its board of directors, committees and staff, tried to find solutions for these concerns. GCSAA formed the Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG) to head a study to investigate the concerns. The group used discussions and surveys with superintendents, owners/employers, marketing specialists and other consultants to gather information. After the group studied the information, it created the plan now known as the PDI.

The process gave GCSAA great insight into what is happening in its world and how superintendents, as well as their employers, view the profession. This research will benefit us by providing us with more targeted marketing, improved educational opportunities, improved delivery of education, the Professional Development Resource and standards that were upgraded for Class A superintendents.

GCSAA did this in full view of the membership and has sought member input into the final proposal during the past year. The process has worked beautifully. Members have been involved and expressed their thoughts. The MSRG and other committees listened, and the final version as pre-

sented is a collaboration of hundreds of peoples' ideas after countless hours of work and discussion.

As I have written elsewhere, the standards required for Class A membership are nothing more than what a vast majority of us already do. Why not take advantage of it and use it as a marketing tool to help sell our profession to the rest of the world? It's as simple as that.

I've debated the PDI with others, and we have a basic philosophical difference about "being told what to do." But PDI offers an upgrade of something that already exists — membership standards. Granted, the current standards of having a title for three years and paying dues are not much, but they are standards.

We've seen the statistics that say most of us support the new standards, especially under-30 superintendents, 97 percent of whom are formally educated. Personally, I never conceived I could become

a superintendent without first attending the two-year program at Penn State University. That was my knowledge base and is the knowledge that future superintendents will work from.

By making education a key component of PDI, we're planning for the future of our profession. We get frustrated when our employers are only concerned about what is happening today instead of planning for the future. But we're planning for our future with PDI.

The concerns first expressed when the original proposal came out, such as the lack of an alternate path, affordable education, accessible education and equality of various forms of education, have been refined in the final

Continued on page 50

D-Day Is Here

Editor's Note: The time for talking is done. The Professional Development Initiative, which has sparked such passionate debate on both sides, is up for a vote at this month's GCSAA Conference & Show in Dallas. We hope this election doesn't require a recount.

Golfdom offered representatives from each side of the issue one last chance to state their cases. Here is what they had to say.

Yea

for PDI

It will segregate the association

BY SCOTT D. HILES

After reading and discussing many points about the Professional Development Initiative, I can't figure out how segregating the membership and mandating ongoing compliance will benefit the future of the association. I disagree with many of PDI's purposes, and here's why:

We're told the PDI is to ensure that new superintendents have adequate education.

False. Employers demand certain educational requirements, and they control the marketplace — not a trade association. I've never been asked in an interview what associations I belong to or if I'm complying with the membership requirements. Employers want to know my educational background and experiences. Employers also want a product, and I must supply it. If I am unable to supply it, they will find someone else who can, regardless of a trade association.

We are told that by meeting the PDI and its requirements, the association can then market its members as educated and up to date.

False. Do you mean to tell me that the association is unable to currently market us as educated? We are the most educated employees in the golf business. We have the most diverse set of competencies in the industry. As it stands, the association can easily promote what we do and who we are.

Those not able or willing to attend mandatory educational programs will not be penalized.

False. A demotion in classification amongst peers shows unwillingness,

incompetence or other less-desirable qualities. Next to my name and classification there is no room for: "already highly educated; 10 years of superintendent experience; Audubon compliant; really wanted to attend required educational venues, but budgetary cutbacks and family issues made this impossible." It just says, "general superintendent member or less than an A."

The association will promote the general superintendent member as much as the Class A member.

False. If this is so, why is a classification even necessary? My association should view me as a fellow superintendent and an equal — not an A, B or Z member.

We each have specific talents, needs and guidelines as diverse as our courses. There's the nine-hole superintendent with a low budget, who's also the mechanic and irrigation tech, among other things.

He's no less a qualified superintendent than an executive superintendent who hasn't jumped in a trench in years.

The low-end superintendent who works miracles with no money and poor equipment may not be able to attend conferences and other set criteria offered by the association. Are you going to tell me that these superintendents do not deserve to be categorized as Class A superintendents?

Some have the resources to attend conferences and seminars; others don't. Where does the association get off telling any of them that they are worth less because they can't?

The mandatory educational requirements will
Continued on page 50



"My association should view me as a fellow superintendent and an equal — not an A, B or Z member."

—SCOTT HILES

Nay

Last Call for PDI

Yea

Continued from page 48

proposal. The entire GCSAA education system has been greatly enhanced. The awarding of points for CGCS will be refined to mirror the PDI. This will make CGCS more affordable and easier to track.

“The entire GCSAA education system has been greatly enhanced.”

- DAVID DOWNING

listened to members' ideas to find those solutions. But it's up to individual members to decide for themselves what they want to do.

One should also remember that PDI is still a volun-

Continued on page 52

GCSAA, which is a member-driven organization, has listened to its members and worked to find an equitable proposal so the entire membership can benefit. It listened to members' concerns about pay scales, security and marketing and worked to find solutions to these concerns. The association also

Nay

Continued from page 49

show class A members as highly educated and up to date.

False. The initiative has been rewritten and grants credit for meeting attendance. It will also grant credit for community service. Wasn't the original intent to force educational requirements? Now it is reduced to this — just to get PDI passed?

This watered-down attempt at an educational opportunity will counteract what the PDI is to promote. To go with the PDI as written would be a mockery of the association.

Yes, there are plenty of gains to be embraced from attending a meeting, conference or trade show. The discussions, camaraderie and idea sharing are great things. We do it freely now. To give educational credit for this is far-fetched.

The association can attract new members by the competencies laid out in the PDI.

False. The association is doing nothing other than segregating its membership and making it less desirable for newcomers to join. The newcomer wants to be treated

Continued on page 52

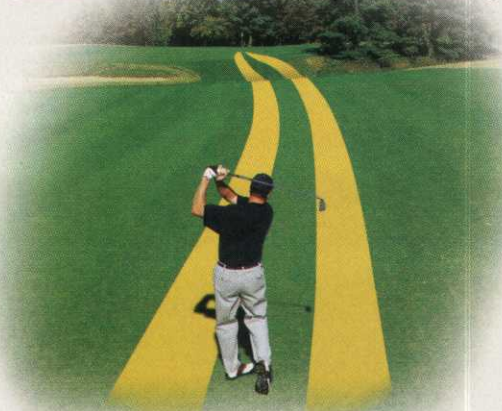
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