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Count on it.

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you have to work hard and absorb as much knowledge in your current job as possible.”

Gerber says he enjoys what he's doing now.

“I haven't set a definite schedule about when I expect to become a superintendent,” he says. “I'm planning to stay here for a while. I'm not going to set myself up for failure by putting pressure on myself to leave by a certain date. When the right job comes along, I'll know it.”

Work on building bridges

“The first question I ask when assistants call me for career advice is, ‘How is your relationship with your superintendent?’” says Kim Heck, the GCSAA's director of career development. “More often than not, the response is, ‘It's not as good as I'd like it to be.’”

Heck says your superintendent should be your biggest booster because most superintendents want to see their assistants succeed.

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“If you keep working hard, your chance will eventually come.”

RON FURLONG, SUPERINTENDENT
AVALON GC, BURLINGTON, WASH.

The Making of a Mentor

While it's incumbent on assistants to build good relationships with their superintendents, it helps if the boss is open to the idea of mentoring his protégés to prepare them for their first superintendent's positions.

Doug Petersan, superintendent at Austin GC in Spicewood, Texas, knows a fair bit about mentoring assistants. Though he's lost track of the number of assistants who've moved on to be successful superintendents (see related story in “Off the Fringe,” pg. 16), he's worked on his mentoring skills for a long time.

“One of the first people I mentored is now retired,” Petersan says, chuckling. “I've either been at this a long time [38 years, to be exact] or I'm just old.”

Petersan says he learned the overarching philosophy of mentoring from his mother, who was a schoolteacher. While Petersan wants to teach the assistants everything he knows, he also wants them to learn how to solve problems on their own. Otherwise, they'll never be able to adapt, and adaptability is a necessary attribute in the profession, he adds.

Jeff Hill, superintendent at Pinehurst No. 8 in Pinehurst, N.C., knows a little about mentoring as well. In fact, the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina recently presented Hill its Eagle Award, which goes each year to a person who displays remarkable mentoring abilities. One of his former assistants nominated him.

“The key to being a good mentor is to give assistants the ability to learn and turn them loose,” Hill says. “They come out of school with a lot of knowledge, but not a lot of experience with things like weather.

“As a superintendent, it's important that you give them as much experience as possible,” he adds. “You should also teach them how to listen by paying close attention to their ideas. Don't be quick to dismiss their management concepts. My assistants often come up with great ideas to manage the course even better.”

Hill also urges his assistants to interact with golfers as much as possible. Good communication skills will help them in future jobs, but they don't necessarily learn them in school, he says. “If they can't communicate the problems they're having on the course to golfers, how will golfers know what they're going through?” Hill says.

Petersan and Hill both agree their success as mentors has much to do with the people who work for them. After all, superintendents can't teach people who refuse to learn, Petersan says.

“You have to be selective about the people you hire,” Petersan says. “The assistants I've had the pleasure of working with have all wanted to educate themselves as much as possible about the job.”

Finally, Petersan says superintendents must communicate their enthusiasm for the job to their assistants, since it's hard for many young people to consider being a superintendent as a lifetime profession.

“If you can't let them know why you love your job, it'll be hard for them to be enthusiastic about it,” Petersan says. “I still enjoy getting up every morning and coming into work, and I believe my assistants can sense that. I hope it's infectious.”

—F.H.A. Jr.



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“Remember, you don’t know everything. Treat every day as a learning experience.”

KEVIN TEMPLIN, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
ANNBRIAR GC, WATERLOO, ILL.

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Therefore, keeping the lines of communication open between the two of you is crucial, she adds.

“If you block out the advice superintendents are trying to give you, you’re asking for disaster,” says Kevin Templin, assistant superintendent at Annbriar GC in Waterloo,

Ill. “They can teach you all you want in the books, but there’s a whole set of skills you can’t learn in school. That’s what you pick up from your boss.”

Templin urges his fellow assistants to have an open mind about their superintendent’s management strategies.

“Remember, you don’t know it all,” Templin says. “Treat everything like a learning experience.”

Heck says assistants should involve themselves in local associations to network with other superintendents and assistants. National shows are the perfect place to make the contacts that will help them find future positions, she says.

“You have to create a network outside of your facility and region,” Heck says. “You never know where your ideal job will turn up.”

Gerber says he regularly attends local association meetings and talks to other superintendents about the skills they expect in an ideal candidate for a top job. That’s the most effective way of making an accurate self-assessment about where you stand in your career, he adds.

“It allows me to see how I’m progressing,” Gerber says. “It also lets me know what other courses are looking for in a superintendent.”

Live on the edge

Gerber says it’s important for assistants to handle pressure-packed situations like presenting reports to green committees. Nothing, however, could have prepared Gerber for *his* first committee presentation.

The Skills You Need to Get Ahead

Jerry Faubel, certified superintendent of Saginaw CC in Saginaw, Mich., and co-founder of Executive Golf Search, a golf course maintenance employment firm, says you must acquire the following skills as an assistant if you want to manage your own course someday:

- Put yourself in a position to manage people. Courses in the market for superintendents are going to want proof that you can lead a team.
- Ask your current superintendent to include you in the budgeting process. Accounting skills will make you more attractive, especially in these tight economic times.

- Stay up on the latest agronomic issues. Attend educational seminars at every opportunity so you can demonstrate the most up-to-date knowledge of your chosen profession.

- Demonstrate an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing situation. Be a leader when conditions change at your course and be flexible.

- Develop a positive attitude about your profession. Your demeanor on the course can either get you labeled as a can-do operator or a listless slacker. That information will always make its way to a prospective employer.

— F.H.A. Jr.

Web Resources for Job Hunters

The following Web sites will help in your search for a superintendent's position (all sites start with <http://www>):

- Golfcoursejob.com
- Getajob.com
- Turfnet.com
- Greenindustryjobs.com
- Golfsurfin.com
- Greenmatchmaker.com
- Golffutures.com

Gerber expected to make a joint presentation to the green committee with superintendent Wayne Van Arendonk on the importance of improving hourly wages at the course. Urgent business called Van Arendonk away shortly after the meeting started, however, so Gerber had to convince the board of the proposal's merits on his own.

"My first thought was, 'Oh, great,'" Gerber says. "Since Wayne had allowed me to help him prepare the report, however, I knew the information almost as well as he did. Thanks to his confidence in my abilities, I made the presentation without much trouble."

Gerber must have done something right because the committee accepted his and Van Arendonk's recommendations. Gerber also learned a valuable lesson: Don't be afraid to take on new challenges.

Jerry Faubel, longtime certified superintendent at Saginaw CC in Saginaw, Mich., and co-founder of Executive Golf Search, a golf course management employment agency, says assistants must take "calculated risks." Otherwise, future employers may consider them too cautious to manage entire courses.

"You're not always going to succeed when you try something new, but you'll always learn valuable lessons, even in failure," Faubel says. "If you're going to succeed over the long haul in this industry, you must always try to be innovative."

Consider the market

Even if you feel you have the skills to tend your own course, there's one factor you can't control. No matter how prepared you are, the market may not have jobs waiting for you.

"We're not seeing the amount of job postings that we've seen in previous years," GCSSA's Heck says. "With the

economy in a downturn, there aren't as many top jobs, particularly in certain areas of the country."

That means assistants who want to be superintendents may have to consider jobs from across the country instead of the regions in which they're most comfortable. Al Turgeon, professor of turf-

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What's the Future Hold?

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grass management at Penn State University and member of GCSAA's faculty resource group, says assistants often focus too closely on particular regions.

"The job market is going to go up and down, and there's no predicting where it will be when you're looking for that perfect job," Turgeon says. "You have to be flexible about where you want to work."

Regardless of the job market, however, Gerber says patience is probably the most important virtue an assistant can possess.

"Don't be in such a rush to get that head job," Gerber says. "In the meantime, learn as much as you can, be innovative and have fun. Those are the keys to landing superintendent jobs." ■

You can reach Frank Andorka, the author of this story, at fandorka@advanstar.com

GCSAA Resources

Kim Heck, GCSAA director of career development, says the association offers the following resources for assistants looking to move up:

■ **Career counseling.** Heck says that she and her two assistants, John Wake and Lyne Tumlinson, split phone calls and are willing to answer any questions assistants might have. They can be reached at 800-472-7878.

■ **Employment Referral Service.** This job-listing section on the GCSAA's Web site (www.gcsaa.org) allows assistants to view job postings. Heck recommends that assistants check the site often to see what qualifications are necessary for the latest job postings so they can update their skills. The subscription cost for the service is \$15 per year.

■ **Résumé critiques.** If you send your résumé to the GCSAA, staff experts will examine it and give you helpful hints about how to make it stronger.

■ **Tips booklets.** The subject of these pamphlets range from how to get your foot in the door at a course to how to be an effective interviewer.

■ **Salary guides.** Check out where you stand financially with this handy online report.

— F.H.A. Jr.



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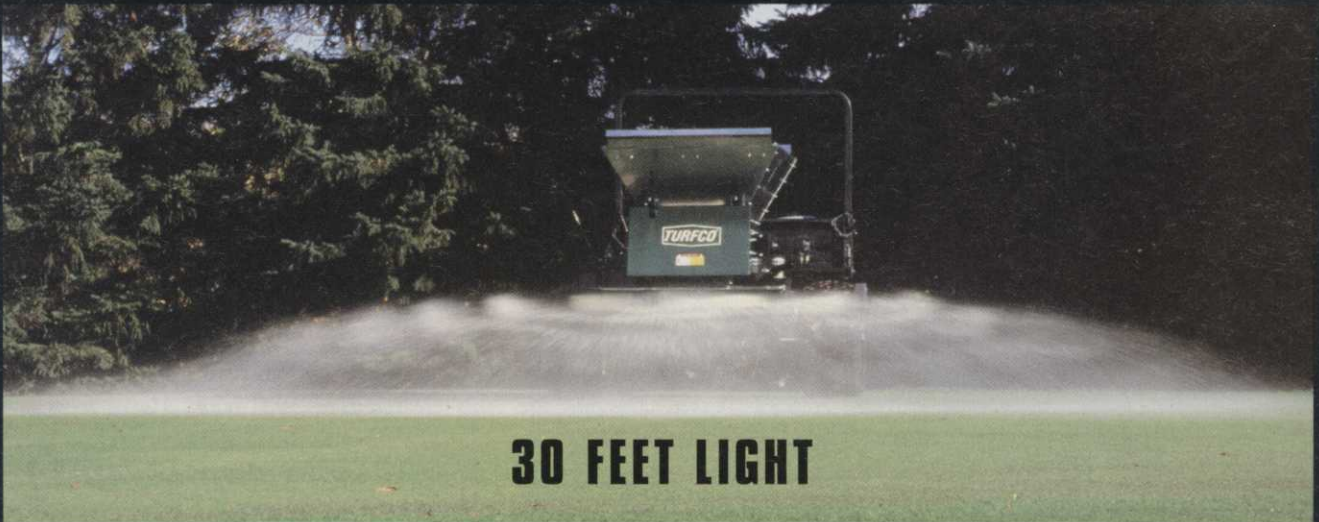
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A Maverick's Theory

Michigan State's Joe Vargas says there's no need to rotate fungicides for proper resistance management. So what are many superintendents to make of his notion, which goes against everything they've been taught?

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

They all laughed at Christopher Columbus when he said the world was round. They also laughed at Michigan State University plant pathology professor Joe Vargas when he said superintendents should *not* rotate fungicides as part of their resistance-management programs to contain dollar spot.

Columbus was correct about the world being round. Vargas, who also says superintendents should only use one fungicide class until the dollar spot organism develops resistance, insists he's right. But some of his peers are still scoffing at his theory.

The maverick Vargas, however, doesn't mind that others have panned his fungicide resistance-management theory like a bad TV pilot. It's happened to the best of them.

"When Charles Darwin said he believed in evolution, did his colleagues grasp him, hug him and kiss him? No. They wouldn't even let him present his paper," says Vargas, noting that Louis Pasteur was also ostracized for his initial theory on pasteurization.

The 60-year-old Vargas, who first wrote about his research in his 1981 book, *Management of Turfgrass Diseases*, insists that superintendents use the same class of fungicide on dollar spot until the disease begins to resist it. Then they should switch to another fungicide with a different chemistry and use it until resistance develops.

At the heart of Vargas' resistance management theory is a dominant dollar spot strain he says is resistant to the benzimidazoles, dicarboximides and demethylase inhibitor chemistries. He says the strain is the result of superintendents rotating several fungicides to control other strains.

"How did that dollar spot strain become resistant to all those chemicals and become the main strain in the population?" Vargas asks rhetorically. "Because superintendents rotated fungicides."

Vargas' research, of course, discounts what most superintendents have been taught — that they should rotate or alternate fungicides for proper resistance management. The rotation/alternation method has been a popular and long-

standing turfgrass maintenance technique for controlling dollar spot and other diseases. That's why so many of Vargas' peers reject his theory and criticize him for it.

"Joe's a good buddy, but he's wrong," says Houston Couch, a professor of plant pathology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. "He doesn't have any evidence [to support his theory]. There isn't a turf pathologist in the United States, Canada or Europe that agrees with him."

Henry C. Wetzel III, BASF Professional Turf's biology project leader for fungicides and nematicides, politely says he respects Vargas' research on resistance management but disagrees with it. "I don't agree with using one fungicide [class] until it's no longer effective," he says.

Dave Ross, Syngenta's technical manager for the turf and ornamental group, also graciously disagrees with Vargas.

"We respect Joe very much, but we have a difference of opinion," he says. "If you use a single product over and over, you will have resistance occur more quickly than if you alternate and allow for less selective pressure from one single active ingredient."

Rick Fletcher, technical and regulatory manager for Cleary Chemical, says a fungicide's mode of action dictates if and when it can develop fungal tolerance. Fungicides with broad modes of action, such as chlorothalonil, mancozeb and PCNB (pentachloronitrobenzine), have low potential for developing fungal tolerance. But fungicides with more specific modes of action, such as benzimidazoles and strobilurins, have moderate to high potential for developing fungal tolerance when used repeatedly. Fletcher says the latter fungicides must be tank mixed or rotated to avoid developing this tolerance.

"If you use them in a tank mix or rotational program with other disease controls with different modes of action, you'll see repeated efficacy at an economic level that warrants re-use of the products," he adds. "This acts to delay the tolerance selection process, but not totally avoid it. New chemistry will need to be continually introduced for the future success of turfgrass disease management."

Despite his detractors, Vargas won't back down from his theory. He says he possesses data that proves it's sound. He claims more of his peers, as well as superintendents, have become open to his thinking.



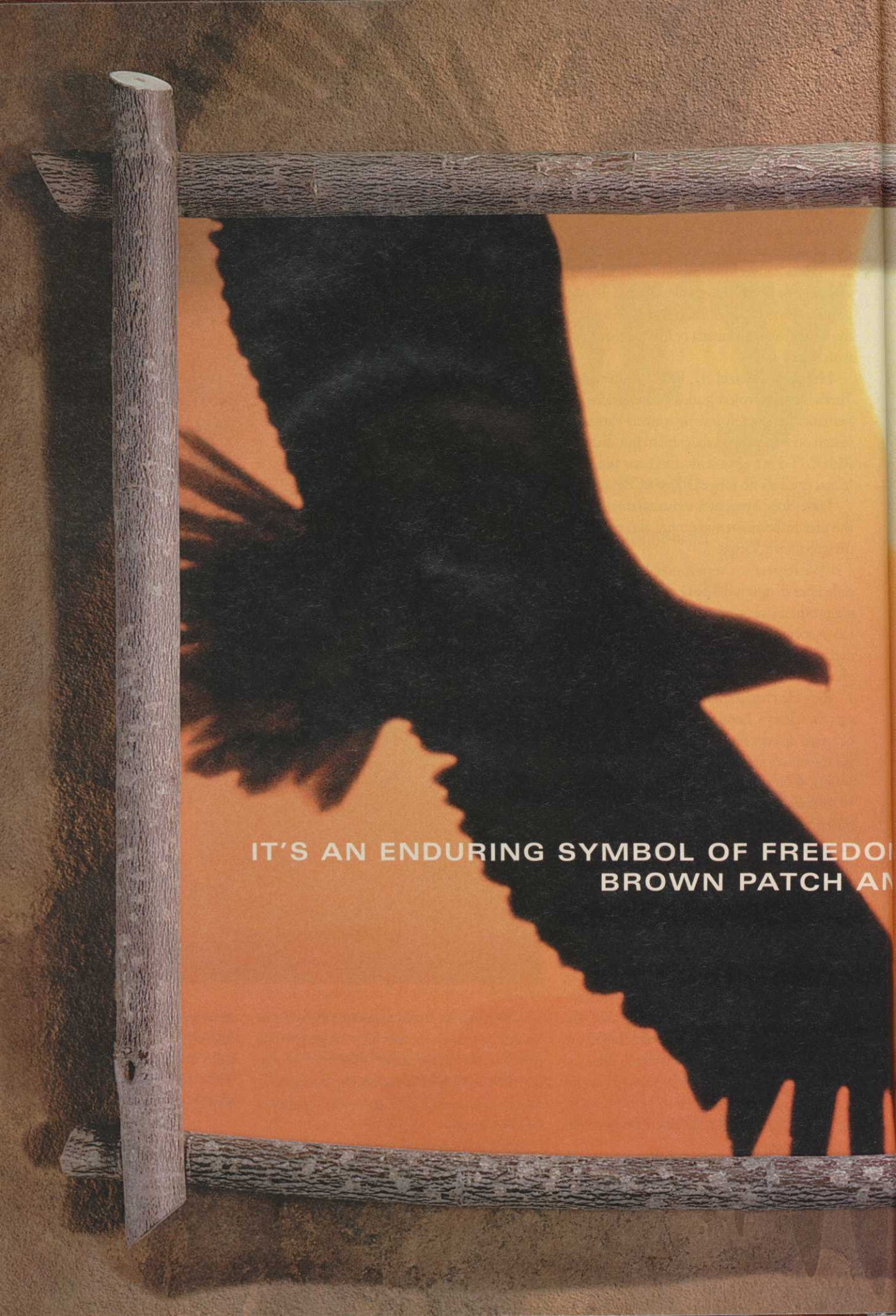
Vargas sure has superintendents talking about his theory. Last December, after Vargas gave his speech on the matter at the Ohio Turf Foundation show in Columbus, several superintendents struck up an online chat about the topic on a GCSAA forum.

But Couch believes Vargas is misleading superintendents by lecturing them about his theory. He says Vargas could get superintendents in trouble if they listen to him. "A good number of superintendents know better than what

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Joe Vargas says his resistance management theory makes perfect sense. "We're not talking rocket science here."

RON HALL



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