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Golfdom

MARCH 2002 • VOLUME 58 • NO. 3

Possibilities in the Palm of Your Hand

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By Frank H. Andorka Jr.



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News from the Big Show

Here's our report from the 73rd GCSAA convention.

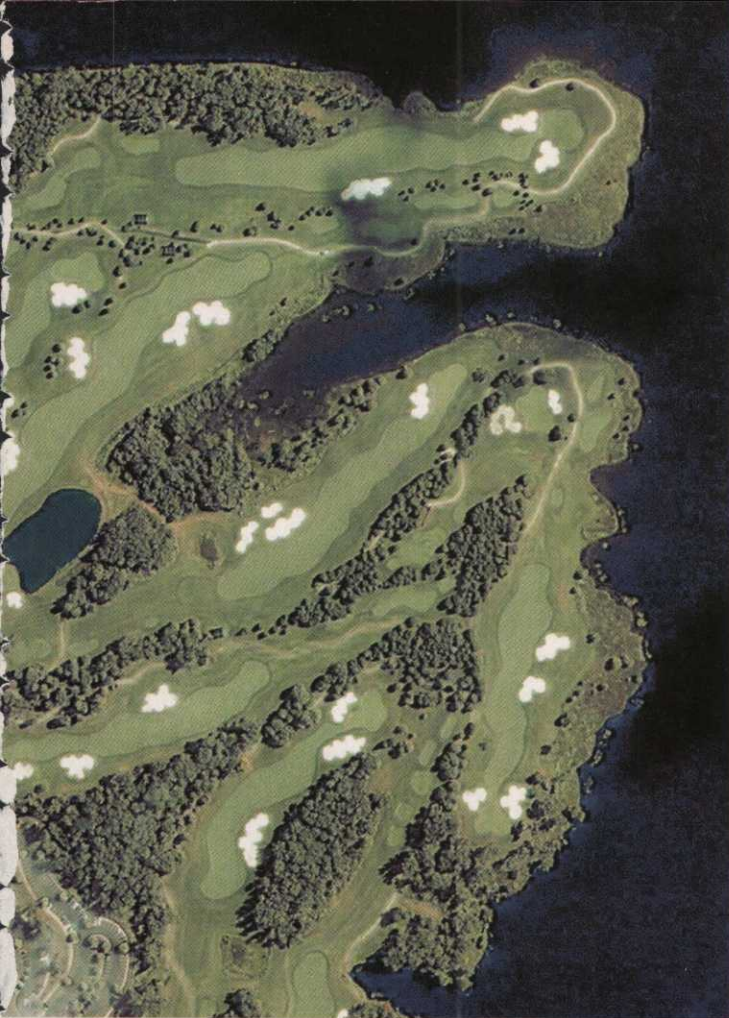
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Neighbors to the North

It's time we gave our Canadian friends the respect they deserve.

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cover story

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Illustrator Vadim Vahrameev of San Francisco (www.vadimart.com) created this vibrant image of a hand-held irrigation control system.

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Electric-powered utility vehicles gain in popularity.

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Getting It Straight

In our February story on controlled-release products, we erroneously omitted United Horticultural Supply and Regal Chemical from a sidebar listing companies that produce the products. For information on UHS, see its Web site at www.uhsonline.com or

call 303-487-9000. For information on Regal, see its Web site at www.regalchem.com or call 800-621-5208.

In the January issue, our story on bunker renovations at night reported that a fiberglass-type material, Klingstone, was used in the process. Klingstone, manufactured by Green Mountain, is actually polyurethane-based.

Going Postal

WE'VE GOT MAIL

Degrees vs. Experience

Bravo to Ron Furlong and his article, "To What Degree?" (January). A four-year degree shows that a person has the drive to excel in his or her field, but doesn't experience count for anything?

I hired two employees who both have four-year turf degrees (the universities will remain unnamed), and they both know their ways around a golf course. Unfortunately, their practical knowledge is lacking.

This is not to say that they aren't learning, and they are getting some great hands-on experience in all facets of the business. If I thought a four-year degree was the only qualification necessary to do golf course maintenance, however, I would have been disappointed. To gain experience, you must be willing to learn, and to learn you must be willing to put in your time. No one knows everything and if a question or problem arises you can fall back on your schooling and training.

In this business, the greatest classroom is the property you were hired to care for, and the best teachers are your peers.

**John Connor, Superintendent
Plymouth CC
Plymouth Meeting, Pa.**

Restrictions Require Input

I read Joel Jackson's column (Shades of Green, November) and agree with most of his comments. Unfortunately, ordinances and watering schedules are often established because utilities and state water agencies hear nothing from golf course and landscape professionals. How can they understand the reality of golf course water management unless superintendents take the time to explain?

Perhaps Jackson doesn't understand why water restrictions are necessary for many water utilities. It's strictly an issue of pumping capacity for many water purveyors. This is an important reason for superintendents to sit down with their water utilities and explain their situations. I don't believe water restrictions are "phony." Instead, they were developed because water utilities had little or no input from golf course and landscape professionals.

In my educational programs, I always explain that golf courses are typically good water managers. I have not met another water purveyor that bad-mouthed golf courses. I believe golf courses are wildlife sanctuaries and have a cooling effect on the environment. This is even more reason for superintendents to be pro-active with local utilities, the public and even environmental activists.

I'm currently working on a document that addresses golf course water management and drought water management. I will do my best to get input from local superintendents to review the document before it's finalized.

My bottom line for superintendents is this: What are you doing to pro-actively work with your water utility?

**Robert Reaves
Landscape Water Conservation
Specialist
Austin, Texas**

Feel like going postal? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at fandorka@advanstar.com, fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.

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12 GCSAA Seminar: Turfgrass Ecology
King of Prussia, Pa.
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12 GCSAA Seminar: Fundamentals of Turfgrass Management I
Johnstown, Pa.
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12 GCSAA Seminar: Creating a Motivated Golf Course Maintenance Team
Boise, Idaho
Contact 800-472-7878

12 GCSAA Seminar: Golf Course Safety, Security and Risk Management
Manchester, Vt.
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12 Cactus and Pine GCSA's South District Meeting
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12 USGA Green Section Regional Seminar
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13 USGA Green Section Regional Seminar
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14 GCSAA Seminar: The Magic of Greenskeeping
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Salt Lake City
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18 GCSAA Seminar: Building Professional Relationships and Communicating with Your Employer
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18 USGA Green Section Regional Seminar
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CIRCLE NO. 105

As faithful readers know, I have previously returned from each year's GCSAA show with pockets stuffed full of indecipherable notes scribbled on cocktail napkins and matchbooks. I decided to change all that in 2002 by bringing along a high-tech digital Palm Pilot to record my observations and provide a well-documented and insightful article on the event. Unfortunately, I dropped the damned thing into a pitcher of beer my first night in town, so here's my usual rambling report.

Badges? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Badges! — A series of small mishaps and bad decisions snowballed into a disaster at registration on the show's opening day. The association decided to combine will-call, on-site registration and exhibitor registration into a single location. Then, after many folks hadn't received their 27-Hole Challenge scorecards in the mail, they sent them to — you guessed it — registration!

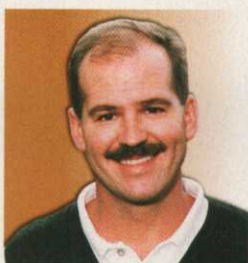
The result was like the theme from *Gilligan's Island* — a three-hour tour to nowhere. What really irritated those imprisoned in the line from hell was that — at about the two-hour mark — they shuffled by "VIP Check-In" where big wheels could pop in and get their badges in minutes without having to slum with the second-class citizens. All that said, kudos do go to new GCSAA honcho Chuck Borman who finally took matters into his own hands, apologized to those in the chain-gang and sent them into the show sans badges. Nice save, Chuck.

Never Say Never — When asked about the registration problem, Borman told me, "That will never happen again . . . and you can quote me on that." Funny, I remember being on the GCSAA staff a decade ago and telling the media exactly the same thing after a similar mess.

Apples and Oranges — The association cheerfully announced that attendance was 20,613, nearly equal to last year's (dreadful) show in Dallas. That's great considering economic and travel concerns, but it's an apples to oranges comparison. The show has historically been much stronger in Orlando than other sites because of the family draw and easy access for Florida superintendents who otherwise don't attend because they're in peak golf season. The last Orlando show in '99 drew 22,623, so let's be

Beer & Scribbles From Orlando '02

BY PAT JONES



THE SHOW HAS
BEEN MUCH
STRONGER IN
ORLANDO BECAUSE
OF THE FAMILY
DRAW AND EASY
ACCESS FOR
FLORIDA
SUPERINTENDENTS

realistic and call it a 10 percent to 15 percent drop. But at a time when most trade shows nationwide are down 20 percent or more, it's another sign that golf is healthier than expected.

Hammer(ed) — I was privileged to join Florida's Mike "The Hammer" Hamilton and a group of other distinguished — but occasionally grumpy — GCSAA online forum users for golf early in the week. What was remarkable about this — besides the fact that my cart partner, Max Bowden, can drink more beer than any human and still appear sober — was that the Doctor of Hammerology actually said something nice about GCSAA. I can't remember exactly what he said (mostly because Bowden kept restocking the cooler), but maybe he's a kinder, gentler Hammer when he isn't in front of the keyboard.

Bonus Booths — I had less time to wander around the show floor than ever before, but I did see some cool new booths that emphasized fun over sales pressure. Most noteworthy were UHS, with a bank of free video games; PBI Gordon, with a NASCAR simulator; and Bayer, with Golden Tee golf games and an appearance by hot Tour player Chris DiMarco.

Last, But Not Least — The word that GCSAA's Steve Mona collapsed and had to be resuscitated by EMTs and rushed to an Orlando hospital sent shivers through the event. Fortunately, he quickly recovered from what the association said was an "easily treatable" neuro-cardiac syndrome. A few words to this man we apparently almost lost: You're the hardest worker I've ever met (which may have led to this problem). You're honest, candid, kind and visionary. You have a great family. You're respected in both the golf community and around Lawrence, Kan. We can't afford to lose someone like you, Steve, so relax and stick around for a while.

Pat Jones can be reached at 440-891-3126 or pjones@advanstar.com



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CIRCLE NO. 106

Ray Hearn's story is as much about passion, persistence and patience as it is about designing golf courses. Hearn, 41, founded his Michigan-based golf architecture business, Raymond Hearn Golf Designs, about six years ago. His road to success was long, but it is a model path for those looking to get into architecture or golf course maintenance.

Hearn grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in St. Clair Shores, Mich., a suburb of Detroit. When he was a young man, the bookish Hearn received a scholarship to any Michigan university he desired. When he chose Michigan State University and its landscape architecture program over the University of Michigan and its medical and law programs, his mother and father flipped. "They thought I was wacko for wanting to study turfgrass science," Hearn says.

They should have known it was coming. Hearn was the kid who often chose gardening over playing ball. He was 12 when he designed his first golf course, a nine-hole layout encompassing seven of his neighbors' yards. "We used wiffle golf balls and real irons," Hearn recalls, still enthusiastic about the track. "We had to hit shots over fences, gardens and pools."

When other boys his age were plotting how to score dates, the 16-year-old Hearn was scheming his career as an architect. Hearn's high-school counselor advised him to contact an architect on the phone and grill him about the business.

At that time, Robert Trent Jones was the biggest name in the business. Hearn dialed his number in New Jersey. "I kept calling his office, but I could never get through to him," Hearn says, assuming Jones was screening his calls.

One day, after Hearn had left umpteen messages, Jones picked up. Gruffly, he told Hearn that his continuous calls were nothing short of badgering.

"I was shaking, and my voice was cracking," Hearn says. "I said, 'Mr. Jones, I just need a little of your time.' He said, 'You've got four minutes.'"

If Hearn wanted to be an architect, Jones told him to attend Michigan State to get a four-year degree in turfgrass science and a minor degree in soil science. After that, Jones told Hearn to get some agronomic experience as a superintendent. And then after that, he told Hearn to return to

A (Long) Model Road to Success

BY LARRY AYLWARD



PASSION AND
PERSISTENCE
PAY OFF FOR
ARCHITECT
RAY HEARN

school to get a landscape architecture degree with a minor in urban planning.

It was nearly a 10-year plan. Some students would have ditched their dreams after hearing they'd have to devote that much time and effort to the process. Hearn, however, followed Jones' blueprint precisely. He obtained the first degree after receiving the scholarship, worked as an assistant superintendent at the Country Club of Detroit for two years and returned to MSU to obtain the landscape architecture degree, which Jones told him was the backbone for understanding design.

Hearn admits it was bittersweet talking to Jones. Bitter because Jones was so brusque with him. Sweet because Jones' passion for the business was infectious. "His passion got me even more fired up," Hearn says.

Hearn willingly committed 9.5 years of his life to become an architect. After earning his second degree, he joined Matthews and Associates, a top firm in Michigan. He worked there for 10 years before opening his own firm in 1996. That year, Hearn was also accepted into the prestigious American Society of Golf Course Architects.

It's been a long haul. When Hearn tells people how long he spent readying himself to become an architect, some ask him why he didn't just go to medical school to become a brain surgeon. But Hearn, who probably had the smarts to do so, couldn't be happier with his career choice.

And Hearn is proud of the time he invested to become an architect. "I don't want to sound like I'm bragging, but I've probably had the most difficult road of anyone," he says.

Even if others have had a longer quest, there's no denying that Hearn's passion, persistence and patience is exemplary. An up-and-comer in the business might just want to call *him* for advice.

Golfdom Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or l aylward@advanstar.com.