

“The Faithful Brotherhood Flag”

Before certified superintendent Walter Mattison died in December 2000, he solicited a request to fellow superintendents for a “flag from your golf course.” The response was tremendous. Mattison received 550 logoed flags from around the world.



The BIG flag is the result of the late Walter Mattison's efforts to unite the profession.

Mattison wanted the flags to live on and stand for unity among superintendents. They are — as one big flag, known as “The Faithful Brotherhood Flag.” Mattison's wife, Nancy, and fellow superintendent, Don Clemans, organized and oversaw the construction of the flags into one flag, which was displayed above the 75th anniversary tribute area on the show floor. It looked grand!

Jimmy Fumbles, Mike Scores

The GCSAA brass had football on the brain when they selected their keynote speakers for this year's show: former Dallas Cowboy coach Jimmy “Don't Touch My Perfect Hair” Johnson and former Chicago Bear middle linebacker Mike “The Scowl” Singletary.

We missed Johnson's talk, and we're glad we did from what we heard about it. We talked to several attendees (including a few high-ranking GCSAA officials) who said Jimmy's talk ... shall we say ... a personal foul.

On the other hand, we saw Singletary's talk, which was magnificent and moving. We admit we were skeptical, especially when we saw Singletary dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and two-toned shoes sitting on the stage with the GCSAA suits before the presentation. We also had no idea what Singletary, one of the baddest linebackers to ever play, would talk about (taking off running backs' heads, maybe?).

Boy, were we surprised. The guy is more than big, strong and fierce. He has a heart the size of William “The Fridge” Perry, his former teammate. Singletary's talk focused on vision, commitment and relationships. He spoke a lot about the relationship he had with his mother, who made the best out of a lot of bad situations. Singletary was superb.

However, we wished Singletary could have come down from the stage and tackled the dude with the ringing cell phone when it went off during a poignant moment in Singletary's speech. It was the epitome of rudeness.

If You Missed Witteveen, You Missed a Good Thing

There was a hint of morose in Gordon Witteveen's voice. “It's a shame there weren't more people here,” he said after his speech.

It *was* a shame. Witteveen, the former veteran superintendent and now owner of Pleasant View GC in Brantford, Ontario, gave a talk under the topic, “Reflecting on the Past — Looking Into the Future.” But the huge room was dotted with a sparse crowd.

Witteveen talked about what it takes to be a great superintendent. He listed four points:

- The ability to produce quality conditions over a long period of time.

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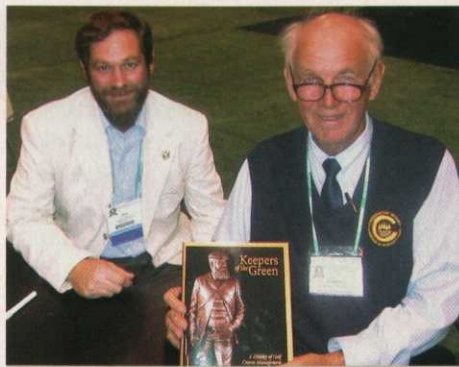
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- Involvement in professional associations, both regional and national.
- Having a legacy of protégés in the field.
- Having the opportunity to host major events and to shine during such competitions.

Witteveen also spoke about his book, *Keepers of the Green*, which he co-authored with writer Bob Labbanca.

“Our book deals with the birth of the game and with the birth of our profession,” Witteveen said. “It also relates the story of the greenkeepers from the time when organized golf first arrived in North America in 1873 until contemporary times. It’s the story of men and women who toiled, often in obscurity, and created some of the finest golf courses in the world.”

Witteveen’s advice to be a successful superintendent? “Listen to your golfers,” he said. “Remember that a pleasant personality is ever more important than agronomic knowledge.”



Gordon Witteveen (right) and Bob Labbanca show off their cool book, *Keepers of the Green*.

Sounds of Silence

Speaking at the forum on “The State of Public Golf” reminded Ted Woehrle, superintendent of The Orchards GC in Washington, Mich., of the first time he spoke at the conference 45 years ago.

“Here I was, barely two years out of Purdue, and I found myself on the same dais with [legendary turf professors] Burt Musser and O.J. Noer,” Woehrle recalls. “When it was finally my time to speak, I couldn’t get the words out. I was speechless.”

Woehrle stood stricken with stage fright as the normally rowdy crowd started staring at him. Slowly but surely, the hall quieted down. It became so silent, in fact, that according to Woehrle, you could have heard a pin drop. “Once the room was completely silent, I suddenly found my voice,” Woehrle says. “I don’t remember exactly what I said, but I finished. Then I sat down, horrified at how I’d performed in front of these turf legends.”

When the panel finished its session and the crowd dispersed, Musser approached Woehrle, who was sure he was about to get the tongue-lashing of his life.

“He said, ‘That silence at the beginning of your talk was one of the most effective attention getters I’ve ever seen,’” Woehrle says. “Then he told me he was going to use it from then on.”

Woehrle says he never had the heart to tell Musser his silence wasn’t intentional.

Cell Phone Follies

We probably don’t have to tell you this if you’re faithful readers of the magazine, but one of our pet peeves here at *Golfdom* is cell phones that ring in the middle of presentations. So imagine our consternation and anger when a cell phone kept ringing every 90 seconds during former superintendent Ray Davies’ presentation on Environmental Success Stories.

Davies, who now oversees maintenance for CourseCo, a



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Lock Out

ClubCar’s booth featured an array of cool utility vehicles and golf cars, but this simple steering-wheel lock caught the eye of at least one superintendent. “Finally, there’s a way for me to keep my crew members from driving off in my vehicle,” he said.



GCSAA Show Quotables

“One of my turf professors used to say, ‘Children learn from constant repetition.’ The same could be said of my members.”

— Robert Collins, certified superintendent of Cripple Creek CC in Dagsboro, Del., on the importance of hammering home your message to members

“Green speed is out of control. ... People take too much time to play the damn game. ... Slow play and excessive conditioning have bogged down the game. Where’s it going to stop?”

— Tim Moraghan, chief agronomist for the USGA

“I’d like everyone to keep their voices down and be quiet. I’m in the midst of dream with this new

job, and I don’t want to wake up.”

— Gregg Breningmeyer, who made his show debut as John Deere’s director of marketing and sales

“We’re not saying outside producers have to drink the Kool-Aid, but it’s important that they understand what a Golf Channel program feels like.”

— Adam Barr, business reporter for the Golf Channel, on why they produce most of their shows internally

“My wife couldn’t be here today because she’s pregnant with our first child. So I get another reward in six months.”

— William Davidson Jr., superintendent of Collier’s Reserve CC in Naples, Fla., after receiving an Environmental Leaders in Golf Award for national private course

Petaluma, Calif.-based management company, battled through the interruptions bravely, even though half his audience turned around every minute or two to try to find the person with the offending phone. By the end of his presentation, the audience was looking for blood.

So when Davies asked for questions, one irritated superintendent shouted, “I have a question: Who owns that phone?”

Davies started to answer, and then looked down at his own computer bag as the phone rang again. Sheepishly, he admitted the offending phone was his. It had been in his computer bag the entire time.

“It’s my wife calling to find out how I’d done with my presentation,” he said, drawing loud laughter from the crowd.

Bundled Up

Maybe it’s because we come from a cold-weather state (Ohio), but we were amused to see GCSAA’s shuttle monitors bundled up in knit hats, gloves and winter coats as they escorted people to and from buses. After all, the temperature didn’t dip much below 45 degrees F.

That’s swimming weather where we come from. ■



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NEIGHBORS TO



The Peace Arch on the boundary between Blaine, Wash., and Douglas, B.C., celebrates the unguarded United States/Canadian border.

THE NORTH

BY RON FURLONG

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

There is a faction out there (you know who you are) that believes the American flag is missing a star. This is the group that thinks of Canada as a vast, cold extension of the northern United States. Canada, for all of its significant achievements, still remains the Rodney Dangerfield of prominent world powers.

By now, you're asking yourself why I feel obligated to defend our northern neighbors. Well, my father was born in the coal-mining town of Glace Bay in Cape Breton, located on the shores of the cold Atlantic in the heart of Nova Scotia. I spent many a summer running wild along the rugged cliffs of Glace Bay. Does this sentimentality make me an expert on Canadian superintendents and their situation? Of course not, but it does make me cringe every time I hear Americans express a lack of respect for their neighbors.

So where does this lack of respect come from? Do the Canadians themselves have an inferiority complex, or is it just a few snobby Americans projecting their own provincial feelings? Do Canadian superintendents feel like they are living in the imposing shadow of the great United States?

In his book *The Canadians*, Andrew H. Malcom encapsulated the problem Canadians have in relations with their southern brother. He wrote, "Nearly eight of every 10 Canadians live within 100 miles of the United States, with its powerful media, its sprawling culture, and its immense economy and popula-

tion. As a result, the United States, although often seen as the land of *bilk* and *money*, looms larger than life in the Canadian mind."

In other words, we've basically been shoved down their throats. On the other hand, Canadian culture gets nary a peep in this country. Nowhere is that truer than when it comes to golf. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think Canadian golf? Mike Wier? Banff Springs? Wearing a really warm jacket? An honest answer, of course, is, "Not much."

In truth, golf north of the border is as popular as it is in the states, with as long and as rich a tradition as we Yanks have. Although perhaps not boasting quite as many classic layouts as the United States, there is still a large share of excellent, traditional golf clubs in Canada. There are several renowned golf course architects that have beautified the Canadian landscape over the years, the most renowned of which is undoubtedly Stanley Thompson, whose crowning

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PHOTODISC

Neighbors to the North

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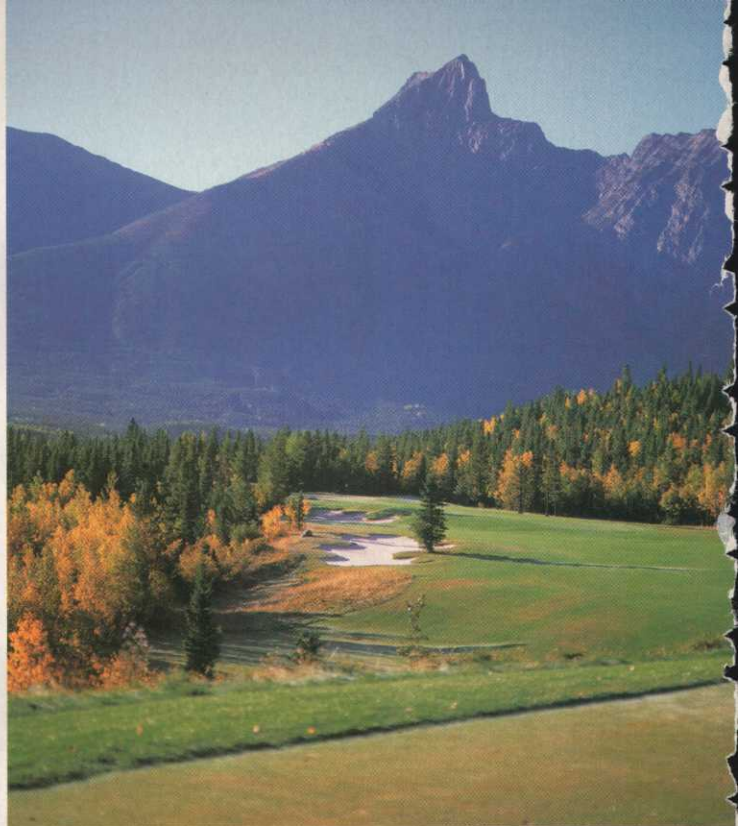
achievement may be Capilano Golf & CC in British Columbia, consistently ranked as one of the best tracks in the world. Other great Canadian architects include Geoffrey Cornish, C.E. Robinson and Howard Watson.

The actual roots of golf's history in Canada pre-date, according to some, those of the United States. While many agree the oldest established club — St. Andrew's in Yonkers, N.Y. — dates to 1888, the Royal Montreal GC was established about 15 years earlier in 1873. The Quebec GC dates to 1875, and a club in Toronto to 1876. With such a storied history, do Canadian superintendents really feel slighted? Or could they care less what a few Whopper-eating Yankees think?

Dean Morrison, superintendent at the Calgary GC in Alberta, who got his education in the states, doesn't feel slighted in the least. "We're all dealing with the same issues," he says.

I asked Walt Gooder, superintendent at Country Hills GC in Calgary (and a former president of the Canadian Golf Superintendent's Association), whether Canada is becoming too Americanized. Gooder shrugged.

"We are a free people — free to choose our own way of life," he says. "Although we are heavily influenced by your politics and your commerce — and some people resent that — in the end we are free to choose. That is our true culture."



Golf courses in Canada, such as Kananaskis Country GC in Alberta, have their share of history. Golf north of the border is as popular as it is in the United States.

As far as superintendents are concerned, it's interesting to compare their views on the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America (GCSAA) vs. the Canadian Golf Superintendent's Association (CGSA). In general, the GCSAA is given high marks in the Great White North.

When asked to explain his membership in an organization outside of his own country, Paul Dermott, certified superintendent at Oakdale Golf & CC in Ontario, says of the GCSAA: "It has the resources to provide and develop quality educational opportunities and promote the superintendent's position within the golf community."

I went back to Morrison and Gooder for additional answers.

Morrison justifies his membership in the GCSAA as a no-brainer. "Education-wise, so much more is offered," he says. "Your GCSAA membership means exposure to what's happening. We're fortunate up here to have access to it. You *have* to be a member."

As far as the GCSAA conference, Morrison says he attends every year.

"I tell my members [that] if there is anything new in golf to be found, it will be at the American show," Morrison says. "Let's face it: It is *the* show. We joke that anything new at the American show will make it up here in three to five years. When you look at the numbers — 20,000 to 25,000 at the GCSAA show compared to 2,000 at the CGSA show — it's staggering."

Gooder agrees. "The GCSAA is a hub for knowledge and innovation. As a professional, I would not be living up to my obligations if I did not get out into the best possible environment for learning," he says.

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Gooder went on to explain why he feels it's important that he also belong to the CGSA. "We need a strong association in Canada to deal with certain issues such as pesticides, the environment and certification. We have a whole different set of environmental and labor laws."

Morrison does feel the Yanks might be slightly more intense about promoting themselves within the industry.

"The American public relations campaign is a little more aggressive," he says. "Canadians are, by nature, a little more reserved in their ways, but our goals are the same. We are constantly talking about better ways to promote ourselves and our image."

Gooder details just how pro-active the Canadians can be.

"We are currently developing, in conjunction with learning institutions and the government, a means of 'certification' that sets legal criteria for enjoying the title superintendent," Gooder says. "This would set education and standards, much like are in place for certified public accountants, lawyers, electricians and engineers. In the future, we anticipate golf courses will be legally required to hire 'certified' superintendents. This seems like a positive and pro-active move."

I asked Morrison if Canada was closing the gap at all as far as research, equipment and innovations.

"Financially, we can't do it," Morrison says. "The way we look at it is: Why reinvent the wheel? We don't have the Penn States and the Michigan States and the research facilities to compete. We don't try to compete."

So is there a lack of respect? Should the United States simply gobble up Canada, one province at a time? Should we get someone working on that 51st star? I'd have to say the answer to all of these questions is an emphatic, "No." Canada is its own wonderful country, with as much pride and individuality as the United States. We could no more claim Canada than we could China.

Following the horrific events that

The Sept. 11 attacks have brought us closer together than ever before.

struck the United States on Sept. 11, it was the Canadian superintendents who were the first to comfort us and aid us in our grief — a grief they felt as strongly as we did. Many messages were posted at the GCSAA Web site from representatives of Canadian associations or simply from individuals who needed to express their feelings.

Gooder's message perhaps says it best: "To all Americans. You are our best friends. You will always be our best friends. We ache with you. We get mad with you. We support you. Living in this world sometimes means we must deal

with cold-blooded insanity, but civilization is stronger and will triumph in the end."

I asked Morrison if he felt the attacks against the United States had the chance to bring Americans and Canadians closer together. "No doubt," he says. "Reading the papers and seeing the responses here in Canada, it has really brought us closer to Americans. As far as I'm concerned, no borders exist anymore. We're all in this together."

Perhaps we need to regard our neighbors to the North with just a little more reverence. They are, after all, battling the same issues and the same uphill struggles that we are and, in many cases, more successfully. As Gooder says, we are best friends, and we will always be best friends. ■

Ron Furlong, superintendent at Avalon GC in Burlington, Wash., can be reached at rf7500@aol.com.

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Real-Life Solutions

■ DEALING WITH SHADED TEES

It's *Not* the Real Thing – But It's Close

Labor-saving synthetic turf fits Oregon course to a 'tee'

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

In February 1996, torrential rains came to Welches, Ore., located in the majestic and dense Mount Hood National Forest. At The Resort at the Mountain, a vacation spot that sports a 27-hole golf course, the rains caused floods that caused problems.

The biggest problem came with a boom and a large splash. A road on a hillside above the golf course collapsed, sending tons of debris into a spring-fed pond below. The landslide also wiped out several huge trees.

Problem

After the staff at The Resort at the Mountain decided to build new tees on a reconstructed hole, they faced another problem — how to grow healthy turf in the shady and stagnant spot where the tees were to be built.

Solution

Install a porous synthetic turf that's resistant to weather, insects, rot, mildew, fungus growth and is nontoxic.



What to do with this mess?

About a year later, the decision-makers at The Resort at the Mountain, including certified superintendent Tony Lasher, agreed to turn the destruction into a creation as part of the course's five-year remodeling plan. Lasher and company had already planned to construct new tees on the Pinecone course's fifth hole, where the cave-in took place. Now they decided to utilize the damage, so to speak.

The landslide destroyed the pond, but left a picturesque wetland in its place surrounded by several tall trees and brush. The idea was to build bridges and trails leading to three separate tee boxes in the wooded area. The tees would over-

Superintendent Tony Lasher and his staff transformed the destruction from a landslide into new tees by using logs from downed trees and synthetic turf.

look the steelhead trout- and salmon smolt-laden wetland. Then golfers could experience a bit of Mother Nature on the environmentally sound course — and face a tough tee shot with a forced carry over the wetland between two areas of dense alders, hemlocks and douglas firs.

It was a cool idea, but not without major challenges.

The problem

It wasn't going to be easy to grow turf in the tall trees and brush, where there was minimal air movement and little

sunlight. The turf would be under tremendous stress in the shady, stagnant spot where the tees were to be constructed. "We'd have had to do a lot of logging to let sunlight in," Lasher says.

In addition, Lasher and his crew would have to use plenty of fertilizer and pesticide to keep the turf alive because it was in such a poor growing area. However, plenty of fertilizers and chemicals weren't part of the course's environmentally friendly turfgrass management philosophy, especially near a wildlife-inhabited wetland.

In the end, the decision was clear. "We decided natural grass wouldn't work on the tee boxes," Lasher says.

The solution

Lasher researched using synthetic turf on the tee boxes and informally interviewed his most frequent golfers to see what they thought of the idea. If Lasher could find the right product, the golfers told him, they were all for the fake turf, especially if it provided an environmentally friendly solution.

Portland State University, located about two hours from The Resort at the Mountain, had recently installed new artificial turf for its soccer field called FieldTurf. Lasher talked to representatives from the school's soccer program, who said they were

Continued on page 73

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