

'I Missed Growing Grass'

ANTAYA LEAVES USGA GREEN SECTION; WANTS TO GO BACK TO BEING A SUPERINTENDENT

By Anthony Pioppi

A year and a half after becoming the first and only female regional agronomist for the USGA Green Section, Kathy Antaya has decided to return to being a superintendent. Her last day with the Northeast Region was Nov. 8.

"It was a wonderful experience," Antaya said. "I'll be grateful forever to the USGA for giving me the opportunity. It just turned out it wasn't my cup of tea. I missed growing grass."

Antaya has since returned to the

Grand Rapids, Mich., area, where she lived before moving to Pennsylvania after taking the USGA job. She has not yet found a new job.

"She'll be missed," said Dave Oatis, director of the Northeast Green Section. "She did a very good job and I was impressed with her work ethic."

According to Antaya, she enjoyed visiting golf courses and learning from, as well as helping superintendents, but the report writing aspect became tedious. "That pretty much tipped the scales for me," she said.

There was also the guilt factor of not being able to take her 4-year-old mutt Jack to work, like she did while a superintendent.

"I spent a lot of evenings promising

him he'd have a job again," she said.

Oatis said there are not plans to fill the vacancy created by Antaya's resignation.

Antaya, former superintendent of Meadows GC in Allendale, Mich., once recalled when she and another female student were the only two women in the turf program at Michigan State University. She said a respected professor and a distinguished superintendent attempted to convince her that a superintendent's job would be too difficult for her. At that point, Antaya said she felt more determined than ever to prove them wrong.

Antaya once said: "Rarely am I reminded of my minority status, but it's a fabulous advantage at large professional gatherings — there are no lines for the bathroom."



Kathy Antaya

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.

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Dorothy closed her eyes, clicked her heels and said, "There's no place like home." She was talking about Kansas. According to a new *Golfdom* survey, many superintendents are saying "there's no place like home" about Kansas in regard to the GCSAA's headquarters. They don't want the association to leave Lawrence, Kan., where it has been stationed for nearly 30 years.

Golfdom's survey, conducted online in January and February, reveals that 43 percent of 425 superintendents are "against" GCSAA moving to another city. Thirty-four percent said they are "for" a move, 12 percent said they "don't care" if the association moves, and 11 percent said "maybe" the GCSAA should move.

Ever since the GCSAA revealed it was conducting a feasibility study to see if it made sense to move to a more "golf-centric" location, superintendents have weighed in with their opinions. Proponents like the idea of the GCSAA skipping Lawrence for a place with palm trees and perennial sunny skies. Opponents say the GCSAA should never move because Lawrence is a charming town in a central location. Plus, they say a move would be costly and disruptive.

I wonder if the GCSAA's leaders anticipated the attention the issue would receive when they went public about the study late last year. Then again, they had to realize that change — or the potential for it, as in this case — gets people worked up.

The GCSAA made it clear from the beginning that it was only exploring its options. But you can bet your commemorative 75th anniversary GCSAA coffee cup that the association was quite serious about the matter. The GCSAA hired a Chicago firm and paid it handsomely to conduct the study to see if the association would be better off doing business in a city like Jacksonville, Fla., or Phoenix. Hopefully, the GCSAA still isn't paying the firm to collect more information about relocating. That's because there doesn't seem like there's anything left to study.

The GCSAA's board of directors made it clear the relocation issue was going nowhere when it canceled a member vote on a proposed amendment to give the board authority to determine where the headquarters should be located. The board canceled the vote because it said the

There's No Place Like Lawrence

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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membership and the organization needed to step back and take a "pause." Skeptics contend the vote was cancelled because the GCSAA knew the amendment would never pass.

Jon Maddern, certified superintendent at Elk Ridge GC in Atlanta, Mich., and new GCSAA president, admits the association heard "loud and clear" from members that they wanted to have a say in the matter. In the end, whenever that is, they will. GCSAA CEO Steve Mona says members will decide on the matter during a vote. He emphasized the vote will happen during an annual meeting, not a special meeting. So the earliest the vote could happen is next February in San Diego, site of the 2004 convention.

Mona has said the GCSAA was criticized for going public about a possible relocation during a time of financial strife within and outside the association. The complaint has sturdy legs. Why would the GCSAA even think about moving when it was losing money and the overall economy was in the dumps?

"We felt like we needed to go public when we did," Mona says, noting the economy was in better shape when the GCSAA began the feasibility study more than 18 months ago. "It's a little bit like having kids. If you wait until you're ready to have them, you'll never have them."

Mona said no city has offered the GCSAA a deal it can't refuse. At this point, after more than 1.5 years of research, one has to wonder if any city will make such an offer anytime soon.

I'm not going out on a limb by saying that the GCSAA isn't going anywhere for the next several years. The association's members won't let it happen — not next year or the year after.

Who cares that Florida and Phoenix are warmer and have more golfers than Lawrence, Kan.? Hey, there's no place like home.

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



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Month

Don't Try To Be a Hero

Scott Heron, superintendent of Bigwin GC in Lake of Bays, Ontario, says golfers who don't want to bogie the par 5, 574-yard 18th hole shouldn't try to be heroes.

"It's a long, narrow green, so you have to hit it right on if you're going to go for it in two," Heron says. "Otherwise, you'll likely end up in the water on the right or the bunker on the left. You're better off playing it safe."

Heron says the interesting part of maintaining the hole is protecting the water on its right side of the hole. Bigwin GC is located on an island, so the water plays an important part of the visual beauty of the hole. To protect it from pesticide and rainwater runoff, the course installed a sump pump on the right side of the green. "All the drainage is designed to take runoff to that spot, and we pump it to the range area," Heron says.

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Shades Of Green

OPINION

If there are 16,000 courses in the United States with superintendents currently on staff, how do the assistant superintendents in the business move up? How many courses even have a first and much less a second assistant? How many supervisory/management jobs are out there for the turf students graduating this spring, and what are their career expectations? Do those expectations come close to reality or are we setting them up for a fall?

This is not intended as an indictment of our industry or our educational institutions, but rather a call for action to get a handle on the supply and demand for superintendents, which we don't have right now. In fact, the GCSAA's committees on career development, membership services and education are doing a pretty good job of fashioning certification and professional development initiative programs to make superintendents highly qualified and more valuable to their clubs.

After all, one of the stated goals of the GCSAA's efforts has been to improve the retention and job stability of the superintendent. If the programs are successful, that means current superintendents will stick around longer, which means recent graduates may have a harder time moving up in the profession.

Normal business thinking is everyone needs to grow to survive. GCSAA wants more members. Turf schools want more students, and new programs are popping up at community colleges everywhere. Yes, we need a constant stream of new blood to fill the ranks, but isn't the supply-and-demand ratio out of balance?

An obvious warning sign everyone ignores is the overwhelming number of résumés submitted for a posted job opening. The fact is we have more job candidates in the system than we have jobs available, and we keep pumping more students through the programs each year. An oversupply of candidates can create an atmosphere for hiring younger, less-experienced and therefore cheaper superintendents, which is detrimental to the overall salary structure of the profession.

Has the industry and all its supporting associations and branches, including turf

Doing Turf Grads A Major Disservice

BY JOEL JACKSON



HOW DOES THE
INDUSTRY JUSTIFY
RECRUITING AND
TRAINING YOUNG
MEN AND WOMEN
FOR JOBS THAT
DON'T EXIST?

schools, ever collectively addressed the issue?

Likely everyone is concerned with their own survival. How do the chairmen of the leading turf programs go to the school administrations and say, "We really need to limit the number of students in the program? We are oversupplying the market with people who can't fulfill their career goals." That would be suicidal for their careers and programs.

We have had serious and gut-wrenching discussions with established and wannabe turf programs who come to our association looking for our help to drive more students to their schools. Individually, each makes a legitimate case. But while community college turf programs can provide training for the local golf course worker who can't go off to a turf school full time, new programs that aspire to turn out potential superintendents only serve to glut the market.

Has anyone done any statistical analyses on how many superintendent positions become vacant each year and why? How many positions are available annually from normal retirement, death, career change, burn out and *bona fide* firings for poor performance? If those numbers are less than the number of students graduating each year, then we have a problem that needs to be addressed.

We can ignore the issue and say the market will determine the supply and demand. How long is an aspiring superintendent candidate expected to wait? In the meantime, how does the industry justify recruiting and training young men and women for jobs that don't exist?

Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

If It's Tournament Time, It's Cleanup

It takes a lot of blood, sweat, tears *and* planning to prep your course for the member-guest, the club championship and other events

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEO MICHAEL



BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Remember when you were a kid and guests were coming to your house? Maybe it was only your Uncle Arnie, your Aunt Janet and your cousin Jack. But your parents toiled like a couple of carpenter ants to tidy up the place. And it wasn't just the normal Saturday morning quick chores to do before lunch. *This* was a Clean Fest that lasted nearly all day. Geez, it was like your parents were readying the house for the president.

Superintendents readying their golf courses for member-guest tournaments and other events can now empathize with their parents' plights to ready their homes for visitors. Back then, they might not have understood why their parents created such a fuss. But they do now.

That's because the prez *is* coming over — as in the club president. And he's bringing a throng of important people with him — the members. These are the people who judge you for what you do, so you'd better have your house, err golf course, in order.

"You want your course to look so good that even the members are surprised how good it looks," says Steve

Time

Numbers, superintendent of Westfield Group CC in Westfield Center, Ohio, who has hosted his share of tournaments, from the Junior PGA Championship to the club championship to the member-guest.

Yes, in this case, you *do* judge a book by its cover. Aesthetics are indispensable when it comes to tournaments, superintendents agree. “You try and put your best foot forward for all of your tournaments, especially your in-house tournaments, because you want to impress your own clients,” says Christopher Ayers, certified golf course superintendent of Lakewood CC in Rockville, Md.

But, like your parents hustling to clean the castle, it’s not easy to get the course sparkling and ready to play. It takes a lot of blood, sweat and, yes, maybe even some tears. It also takes a lot of time and patience. And it takes planning ... make that PLANNING.

Sunday best

It’s time to edge the bunkers, weed the flowerbeds, paint the benches, trim the trees, dye the ponds, cut new cups, and bring out the special tee markers and pin flags.

Welcome to your course’s member-guest tournament.



Courses host myriad events — including outings, club championships, amateur events and professional tournaments — but the member-guest is the biggest of them all for private clubs, unless you’re Augusta in April. The member-guest is the tournament where superintendents want their courses looking their absolute best.

“I look at the member-guest as a separate golf tournament,” says Keith Ihms, certified superintendent of Bent Tree CC in Dallas. “The member-guest is a little more about showing off the facility than it is about playability.”

It’s about doing all the little things, such as striping the fairways and edging the bunkers, to get a course looking as good as Joe Millionaire in a \$1,000 suit.

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"You're often judged on the playability of your golf course," Ayers says. "But this time it's about aesthetics."

Ihms says he makes it a point to spend more time on the course during the practice round of a member-guest so he can talk with members and meet their guests. "The members like to introduce me as their superintendent," he says.

While the member-guest showcases a golf course's beauty, it's not the only tournament for which superintendents dress their courses for success. Numbers has Westfield looking its best for the Junior PGA Championship, which the club will host for the third time this summer.

To prepare for the event, Numbers organizes a cleaning party among members to spruce up the course. Members pay \$25 to clean it and party afterward.

"We have an adopt-the-hole party the Friday before the tournament begins," Numbers says.

"We assign groups of members to clean up different holes. We have a contest to see which group brings in the most pine cones, sticks and paper.

These people drag in a ton of stuff."

The members feel good about what they've done, Numbers says. They're proud to host the tournament, even though they lose the course for a week, he adds.

The playability factor

For competitive tournaments, professional or amateur, a course should be judged on how it plays, states John Miller, certified superintendent of the Golf Club at Yankee Trace

GC in Beaver Creek, Ohio. A superintendent's goal

should not be to set up the course to compete with golfers, Miller adds "Let golfers compete with themselves," he

says. "Don't try to trick up the course. The

honor that you receive by a high par score is not worth the criticism you'll receive."

Green speed poses the biggest playability issue. While Ayers says preparing the course for men's tournaments is similar to preparing it for women's events, the big difference between the two is green speed.

"You try not to do anything too dramatically different for the men that you would do for the women and vice versa," Ayers says. "But the women don't want lightning-fast greens."

Green speed will be different for different events. But speed, ball roll and consistency on greens are vital to the success of any tournament, Ayers adds.

The bottom line, says Ayers, who has hosted junior tournaments and local amateur events in addition to in-house tournaments, is that a superintendent must present proper course playability in accordance with the caliber of players.

"You don't want greens stimping at 12 feet for 13- or 14-year-old junior golfers," he says. "You tailor the golf course to the clientele of the tournament."

Bent Tree holds its club championship at the end of the season. The key to preparing the course for the event is to ensure its playability is consistent to what it has been throughout the season, Ihms says. That way the players can use the skills they've honed.

"If they were playing greens that ran 9 feet all summer, we don't want to go to a speed of 11 feet just for those three days of the tournament," Ihms says. "We don't try and alter the playability of the course too much for the club championship."

Getting the rough ready for tournaments is another tricky component of the process.

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