

# “Quotable

“My backyard doesn’t look too good. But that’s the old adage with superintendents. One time a representative from a lawn company came to our door. My wife answered and the man said he wanted to know if he could take care of our lawn. My wife told him, ‘No, my husband is in the business.’ The man looked around the yard and said, ‘He is?’ ”

— Gregg Guyman, superintendent of O’Bannon Creek GC in Loveland, Ohio, on why it’s so difficult to take care of his yard in the summer, especially when he’s working so many hours at the course.



“When I’m stressed out, I take my truck and park it on a dam between two ponds. Then I pull out a fishing pole from the back of my truck and throw a plug in the water.”

— Rusty Tisdale, superintendent of Cobb’s Glen CC in Anderson, S.C., on relaxation.

“I graduated with a philosophy degree. Naturally, the best thing to do with that was go into the golf course business.”

— Dave Spotts, superintendent of Eagle Crossing GC in Carlisle, Pa.

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I could probably get an interview with Tiger Woods easier than I could get an interview with Brad Owen. And that's a cryin' shame. Owen is the superintendent of Augusta National GC, where Woods has won three Masters. But Owen may be tougher to get on the phone to talk turf than it is to get Tiger on the horn to talk about the art of getting up and down after missing a green.

I wanted to interview Owen for a story I researched and wrote on superintendents who tend classical courses. After all, Owen is superintendent of one of the most classic classical courses in the world.

I wanted to talk to Owen about what it's like to tend turf at such a revered track. I wanted to ask him about the agronomic challenges on the course. I wanted to ask him about the political pressures he faces in dealing with such an esteemed membership.

I wanted to interview Owen so *Golfdom* readers — Owen's peers — could learn from what he had to say. Some superintendents would probably hang on every word Owen would have to say about tending turf at Augusta in the 21st century.

I interviewed several other superintendents of classical courses for the story, which appears in this month's issue on page 58. Certified superintendent Mark Kuhns, director of grounds for Baltusrol GC, put me up for the night in the club's historic clubhouse before giving me a guided tour of the club's two courses the next day. Matt Shaffer, director of golf course operations at Merion GC, also gave me a tour and was as candid as a person could be during our interview.

When I tried to call Owen for the story to see if he was interested in a phone interview, I was cast into his voicemail. I left him a message telling him about the story and asked him if I could have 15 minutes of his time. I received a call back from someone, presumably the Augusta maintenance facility's receptionist, who spoke rapidly and in a monotone voice: "Brad Owen wanted me to call you and thank you for considering to include him in the article you're writing, but he's simply not available to talk to the media. He appreciates your understanding of this. Thank you very much. Bye."

I wasn't surprised that Owen declined

## Augusta and the Sounds of Silence

BY LARRY AYLWARD



THE WAY AUGUSTA  
HANDLES MEDIA  
RELATIONS IS A  
JOKE. THE CLUB IS  
TAKING ITSELF WAY  
TOO SERIOUSLY

because of my similar past experiences of trying to get an interview with him. But this time I wanted a worthy explanation as to why he wouldn't talk. So I called the woman back, and she referred me to Glen Greenspan, Augusta's communications director. Greenspan told me I couldn't talk to Owen because "it's our long-standing policy" not to give interviews.

"But I only want to talk to Brad about turf," I said in a bewildered tone.

"It's just our policy, regardless of whether it's a trade magazine, the national media or a local radio station," Greenspan said, noting that chairman Hootie Johnson is the only one who can talk. "It's just the way we do things." (After the Martha Burk fiasco, maybe Augusta should put the clamps on Hootie's vocal cords, too.)

Well, the way Augusta handles media relations is a joke. The club is taking itself *way* too seriously. What's Augusta's rationale? Is this all part of the club's mystique? Is the club wary that some important information will be leaked? Whatever it is, Augusta comes off as arrogant and ignorant.

I believe Owen would gladly consent to an interview if the Augusta brass loosened its reins on him and allowed him to talk. Owen is obviously abiding by the club's inane rule.

Rarely does a superintendent decline to talk to me or probably any other reporter. And the superintendents who decline interviews give solid reasons for doing so.

Most superintendents enjoy being interviewed and like to share information they think can help their peers. That's precisely what's so great about this industry — that brotherhood factor. It's also what this magazine is all about.

Isn't it a shame that the superintendent of arguably the most famous course in the world can't participate in the process?

Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or [larylward@advanstar.com](mailto:larylward@advanstar.com).

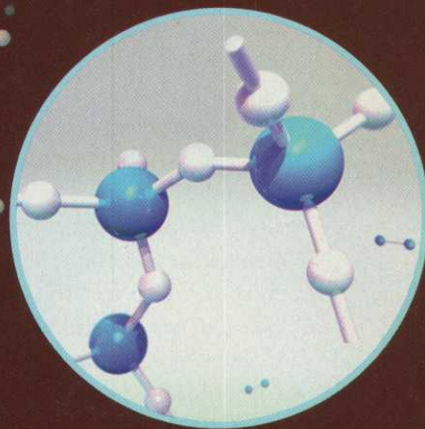
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Turf News, November/December 2002: 29p.

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**I**f you think it's tough to please 300 club members, try getting superintendents to return calls, submit dues, newsletter articles, committee reports, surveys and seminar registrations on time as a chapter employee.

At the recent bi-annual GCSAA Chapter Executives Conference in April, I got an earful of frustration from some of my chapter staff contemporaries. So I thought I'd send a reminder to all those chapters out there: Whether you have an executive director with an office or a superintendent's wife working out of her home, these folks represent you and should be treated as professionally as any employee you have at your course.

Key issues that chapters should consider when assessing the value of a chapter employee:

- Fair compensation with annual evaluations and scheduled increases.
- Reimbursement for home office space, electricity and phone expenses. How much would real office rent be?
- Respect and appreciation for the work being done. It's not rocket science but it does take accuracy, diligence and enthusiasm. We are human beings — not pieces of office equipment.
- Timely coverage of reasonable work-related expenses incurred by the employee.
- Conduct all business and personal communications in a timely and professional manner.
- Failure to plan on the board's part should not become an emergency for the employee.

Like it or not, associations have moved beyond shoe-box accounting and 11th-hour newsletters that arrive announcing the chapter meeting on the meeting date. Just as golfers have high expectations on course conditions, today's association members expect timely communications, smooth running meetings and events, and balanced checkbooks. While many volunteer association officers still shoulder the burdens in addition to full "real-job" schedules, it's becoming evident that association management has become a real job that makes running a local chapter easier for superintendents.

Some of us ex-superintendents or other industry types turned chapter executives have it easier than the part-time women who serve many of the 103 affiliated GCSAA chapters

## Unsung Heroes Deserve Respect

BY JOEL JACKSON



OUR PART-TIME  
PEOPLE ARE AS  
VALUABLE TO THE  
ASSOCIATION AS ANY  
MEMBER SITTING  
ON THE BOARD

around the country. We're still considered peers and don't get the flack that many of those serving in part-time roles experience. But we all share some common frustrations when it comes to meeting deadlines.

It's amazing to me that superintendents of all people don't know the importance of meeting deadlines and communicating up and down the chain of command. Some association members seem to get tunnel vision when it comes to the internal operations of their own organizations. It's as if the rules of common business courtesy don't apply because a person works out of his or her home office or on a flexible schedule. When chapter staffers try to get things done on time, the reaction is often inaction by the membership.

As time begins to run out and the staffer begins to push a little, superintendents often push back with ugly comments like, "She's only a part timer," or "She gets paid for what she does," or "She's just a secretary — why do I have to listen to her?"

True, most of the work is not 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but when the affiliation agreements, incorporation papers and not-for-profit tax returns need to be filed, when the membership directory and newsletter need to get to the printer, when the dues renewals need to be processed and the checkbook balanced, our part-time people are as valuable to the association as any board member.

Most of the time, these employees don't complain about the ill treatment they often receive from their members. So take a moment to thank these often unsung heroes of our local chapters — and treat them the way you'd expect your members to treat you.

They deserve nothing less.

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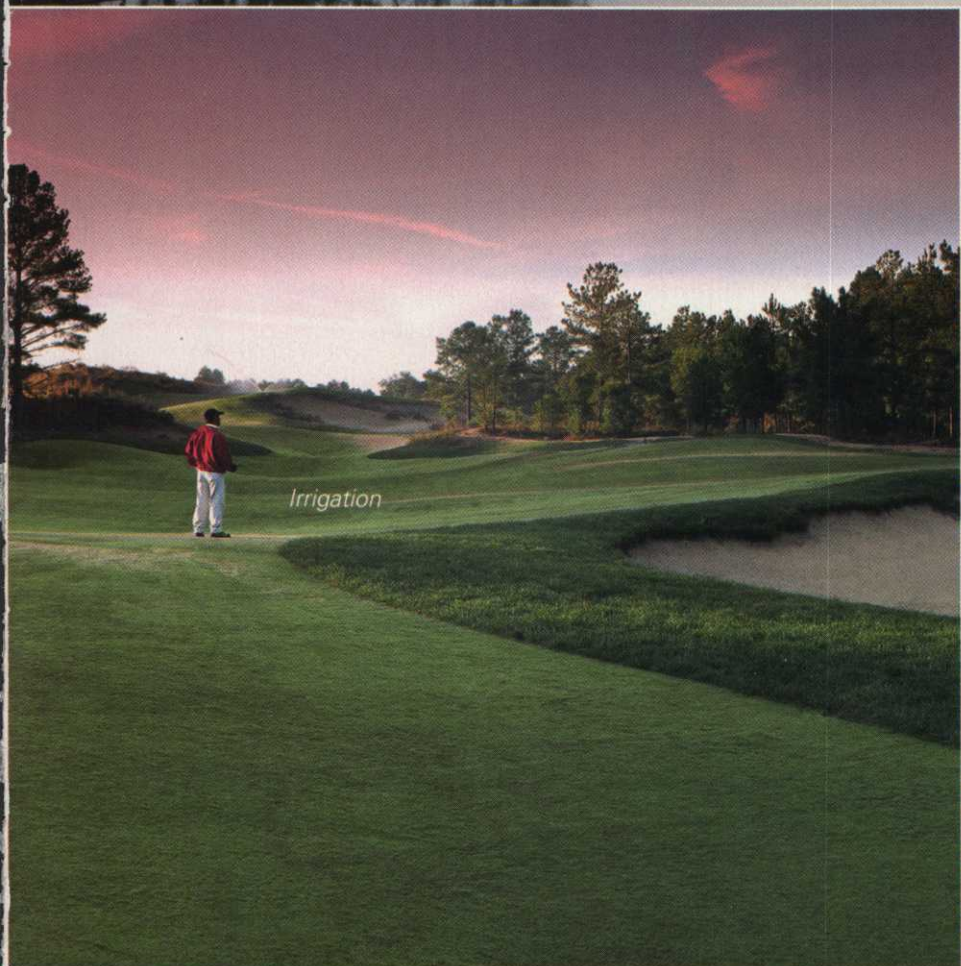
*Joel Jackson, CGCS, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*



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# Hole of the



■ No. 16  
Royal St. George  
Sandwich, England

# Month

## One of the Greats — Maybe the Greatest

It is perhaps the finest golf course in the United Kingdom. Of course, that statement could be argued for hours — especially by those faithful to St. Andrews or Carnoustie — by enthusiasts of European golf course design. But one thing is for sure: Royal St. George, site of this year's Open Championship in Sandwich, is one of the great golf courses in England and Europe.

Royal St. George, which opened in 1887, hosts its 13th British Open, set for July 17-20. The club hosted its first Open in 1894. It hosted its last Open in 1993, which was won by Greg Norman.

This Open, however, will play more than 240 yards longer. To keep up with the big hitters (and the Big Bertha drivers), Royal St. George officials have lengthened the course to 7,106 yards.

St. George is known for its tall and deep bunkers. Here's betting the guys will be hitting a lot of irons off the tees, even with the increased distance. Remember to play the John Deere Major Challenge.

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**I**n the sport formerly known as golf, players were encouraged to approach greens by using any means necessary. They could loft iron shots high into the air. Or they might decide the wind was too unpredictable an opt to use the earth's surface to advance toward the green.

Or they might use a combination of both techniques: approach the putting surface most of the way through the air, and then let the ground short of the green take over.

Some genius in Scotland figured out that the options provided by short grass in front and around greens made the sport more interesting. So to accommodate this democratic version of the sport, greens now traditionally connect to the fairways whenever possible. An "approach" is cared for in the area immediately fronting the playing surface and sometimes all around the green.

Unfortunately, things like freedom, options and interest are annoyances in today's golf.

Maybe it's because such principles could spark a creative thought or allow — heaven forbid — a lesser player to occasionally beat a better player with a shred of ingenuity. Or luck.

The golfer who's against approaches believes that every shot should be a high-lofted masterpiece that lands softly and spins back three feet. That ground game stuff is for sissies, he says. Sometimes you wonder if these types would erect a wall around every green if handed brick and mortar.

There are a few golfers who still demand that the approach remain relevant. They recognize that firm short grass leads to more interesting possibilities.

So let's say you want your course to have good old-fashioned approaches in the true spirit of the game. Can such a concept be sold to a golfing public that listens to the likes of Peter Kostis for information on how the game should be played?

Well, if you should be so bold to suggest wider, firmer approach areas around greens, your campaign requires that you pander to special-interest groups (well, let's be honest, self-interest groups).

Here's how to tailor the argument to good golfers (and the growing legion that believes they play the game well): approaches and

## Approach Should Remain Relevant

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



A GOLFER AGAINST  
APPROACHES  
BELIEVES THAT  
EVERY SHOT SHOULD  
BE A HIGH-LOFTED  
MASTERPIECE THAT  
LANDS SOFTLY  
AND SPINS BACK  
THREE FEET

short grass around greens will reward your beautifully controlled approach shots. Why? Because those drop-kicks and other misses that bad golfers get away with will now roll away from greens protected by firm, short turf. Those hacks will be penalized for their inferiority. Praise our golfing lord.

Now here's how you make a case to the skill-challenged golfer who is against tightly mown grass in the vicinity of greens.

Yes, we know you like a little rough to slow down your topped seven-woods from 120 yards out. However, consider this: Good players don't like approaches because they start to consider options. That means they have to think about multiple possibilities while you just casually pull-slap your ball to the hole, then pull out your putter when you inevitably miss the green.

When good players are faced with options when hitting into a green and chip-shot decisions — say between a sand wedge or seven-iron — you have them thinking. Getting their little brains working will often lead to bad play. Advantage to you, Mr. Hack.

Adding approaches or improving their playing quality makes golf more interesting by multiplying dimensions and adding layers to a golf course. But sadly, increased interest and fun typically lose out to many golfers' vain obsessions with slope and course ratings. They think more short grass equals easier golf, and then their precious little handicaps won't travel well.

Over time, however, more short grass around the greens makes a course more difficult in a cerebral way, not a penal way. There's a big difference.

However, most golfers won't understand the distinction. But it won't be the first time that has happened.

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*Golfdom Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford can be reached at [geoffshackelford@aol.com](mailto:geoffshackelford@aol.com).*

The

# FQPA

## What you need to know and why you should care

By Frank H. Andorka Jr. Managing Editor

**S**uperintendents can't know it all. With information bombarding them on a daily basis — on disease resistance, about the latest in adjuvant technology and the West Nile virus — they don't have time to dissect the details of most federal legislation.

But that doesn't mean that federal law doesn't affect what they do every day. One piece of legislation that most superintendents aren't familiar with is the Food Quality Protection Act, or FQPA. Passed in 1996, it mandated that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review 9,700 environmental tolerances (which the EPA defines as the maximum amounts of chemicals allowed to remain in or on foods) of 600 pesticides by 2006. In establishing these tolerances, the law requires the agency to consider *all* uses of the chemicals, including turf uses, when establishing a tolerance. If the combined uses for a pesticide exceed the established maximum levels, the EPA has the right to remove the chemicals from the market.

The process is costly for the companies who must defend the chemicals when they come up for review. The expense forces hard decisions about which chemicals will stay in the market and which will go.

The companies say the input of superintendents is vital in making those decisions. Many superintendents don't take the time to get involved, however, either because of

