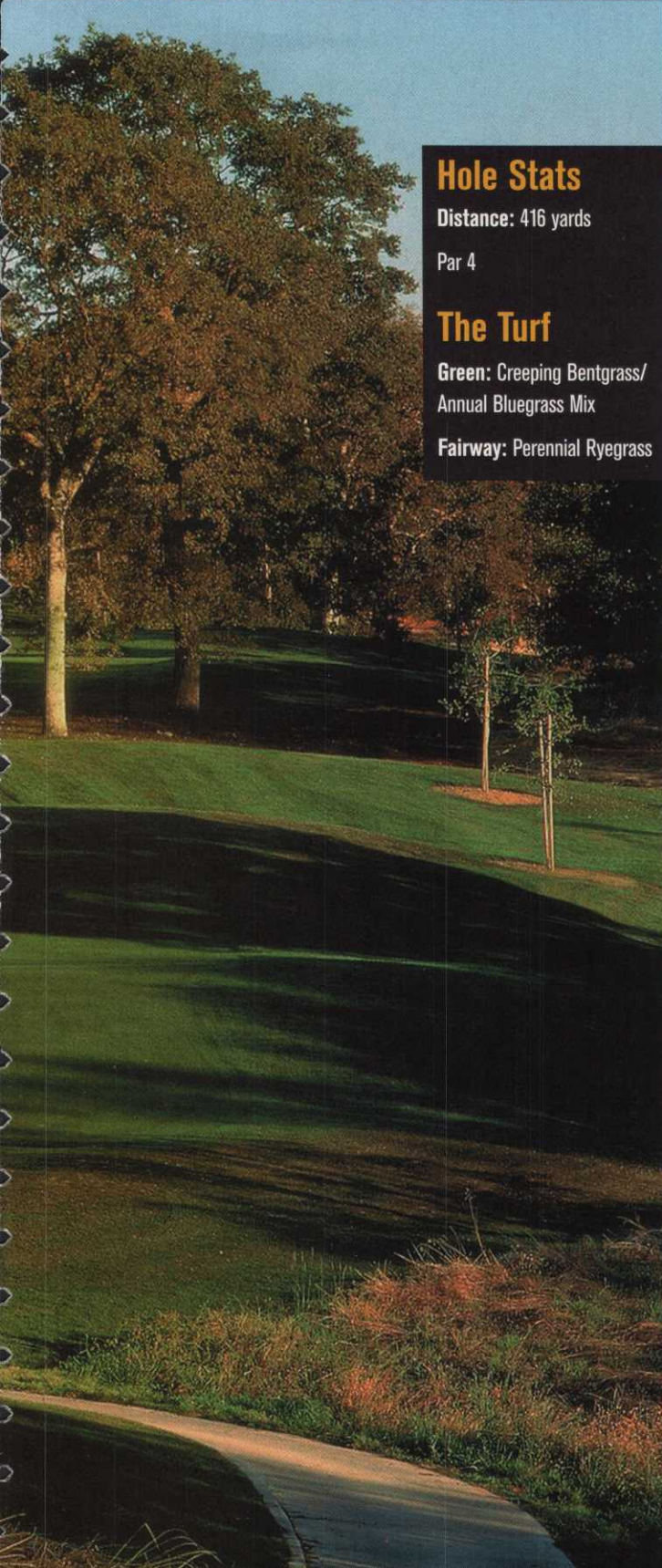


Month



Hole Stats

Distance: 416 yards

Par 4

The Turf

Green: Creeping Bentgrass/
Annual Bluegrass Mix

Fairway: Perennial Ryegrass

Located in the Sierra Nevada foothills, The Ridge Golf Course sits atop land once used by the ancient Maidu tribe and later by miners traveling to the California Gold Rush. Today, golfers enjoy a classic 18-hole course designed by master architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. Hundreds of stately blue oaks complement the rolling terrain, giving the course a mature feel that challenges golfers at any level.

Steve Fackler has served as certified superintendent of the course since it opened in 1999. He also shares his professional experience with future turf-care specialists as an adjunct professor at Sierra Community



College in nearby Rocklin, Calif. "I teach my students about both traditional and organic practices," Fackler says.

Back at his course, the 416-yard, par-4 13th hole challenges golfers with two extremely difficult shots. It requires a first shot to a very narrow landing on an uphill slope. Golfers must then maneuver between three sand traps and two mature valley oaks to reach the elevated and well-guarded green. "It's one of the more difficult holes on the course," Fackler says.

Fackler's main philosophy for course maintenance is a base-saturation method of soil balancing, where his crew regularly monitors calcium and magnesium ratios in the soil. He practices what he preaches to students, mixing organic methods with chemicals when necessary to keep his course in pristine condition. When facing an outbreak of fairy ring, Fackler uses Insignia® fungicide to control the problem. Fackler begins his applications when the soil temperature rises, beginning in the spring and continuing into early fall. "Insignia works well on fairy ring, and I have also been successful using it to control grey leaf spot," he says.

To see past Holes of the Month, download a desktop image and more, visit www.turfacts.com.

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GOLFDOM'S HOLE OF THE MONTH IS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

**BASF**

The Chemical Company

It's been a busy spring here at the Lake Omigosh Golf Club in central Florida. A warm, cloudy winter has sprouted more fungi than superintendent Duffy McDuffy can shake a spray boom at. McDuffy's computer program says darn near every day is a potential disease day. But that's not what he is peeved at right now. It's the politicians trying to regulate fertilizers who are making life miserable for the green industry and state regulators, too.

McDuffy has been so frustrated with these knee-jerk laws popping up that he went to a commission meeting down in Wannabe County and spoke about the need to ban dihydrogen oxide, a corrosive chemical compound that could suffocate people as a liquid and burn people in a gaseous state. The council passed a resolution to seek a ban of this foul substance and thank the gentleman for his proactive citizenship.

After the vote was approved, McDuffy said, "Congratulations, you have just banned water." The commission took a hasty break, and he was not invited back into chambers when the meeting reconvened.

McDuffy says: "With about the same level of scientific knowledge, there are a score of local governments proposing or passing laws based on hearsay and gut feelings. They are writing into law the use of fertilizer products that don't even exist, and banning the application of any fertilizer during whatever they think is the rainy season — some say June to September, others say July to October. They don't understand the unintended consequences of their unscientific folly. Imagine trying to comply with differing fertilizer requirements for 475 cities and 67 counties. It's no way to run a business and surely no way to make a law."

The media, activists and local governments seem to think nutrient runoff and leaching are as certain as the Laws of Gravity and the sun rising in the east. These folks don't or won't understand that too much nitrogen or phosphorus is bad, regardless of the source. Their eyes glaze over when you try to explain that even a slow-release or organic fertilizer has to

Agronomy Doesn't Mix With Politics

BY JOEL JACKSON



LEGISLATORS NEED

A LITTLE HELP

FROM PEOPLE WHO

KNOW BETTER —

PEOPLE LIKE YOU

become soluble to be used by grass. They won't even acknowledge the nutrient loading from their own sewage treatment plants pumping millions of gallons of effluent directly into the waters daily that they are supposedly protecting from fertilizers. Talk about trying to swat the fly on an elephant's butt.

Then McDuffy relayed another whopper: After passing an ordinance banning the sale and use of fast-release fertilizer, a city attorney was asked what constitutes a fast-release fertilizer under the new law. He said, "I don't know! They just told me to write something." We heard later local green industry representatives finally met with the attorney and city council to provide some basic facts about fertilizers. Then the same attorney spent an hour on the phone with the state's Department of Agriculture bureau chief in charge of regulating fertilizers. Word from the regulator is the attorney said, "I wish I had called you six months ago!"

Sadly, we know politics is perception, and these local governments want to be perceived as doing something positive for the local environment. But if they would do a little basic research and reach out to turf professionals, then they would learn about the state's Urban Fertilizer Rule and the Golf and Green Industry BMP manuals that are based on sound proven agronomic facts. If they must pass an ordinance, it should require homeowners, lawn care and golf course businesses alike to follow BMPs, then everybody could be winners.

So long from Lake Omigosh, where the superintendent and crew manage resources, and most homeowners and members still mistakenly think if a little is good, then more is better.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.

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Upon the U.S. Open's return to Oakmont next month, excitement builds with this grand design taking center stage. Many in the golf course industry anticipate numerous stories detailing the club's extensive tree removal program.

Some are even hoping that this spotlight on deforestation will help to convince course leadership to take down a few more of those shade-creating woody plants.

Be careful what you wish for.

There is the possibility that Oakmont's virtual clear-cutting may make your sales pitch tougher, not easier.

Not because Oakmont's work was poor or wrong. Quite the contrary.

No, just remember that no matter how much sense tree removal makes for turf or design considerations, most golfers become delusional when the emotions of tree removal kick in.

Here's the back story: Oakmont's early-20th century design was an open but rugged test that lasted for nearly 60 years until a club president took umbrage when golf writer Herbert Warren Wind coined Oakmont "that ugly, old brute."

So with the help of Robert Trent Jones, Oakmont was "beautified" with at least 3,500 trees.

Starting in the late 1990s, the club embarked on a multi-year program to return the course to its original look. Oakmont not only remains beautiful because of its ferocious architecture, but also because turfgrass growing conditions have improved.

Being able to point that out this June to your course leaders should be a good thing. But be prepared for an overreaction.

"You want to clear cut our property, don't you?"

Or, "We're not a links course and never want to be one, so don't even think of cutting down that blue spruce we planted in memory of the club's favorite squirrel, Delores."

Still, Oakmont should serve as a positive conversation starter. So be prepared to make your case. Here are a few of the latest suggestions from the battle lines:

Commission studies. Groups like Arborcom (arborcom.ca) can provide detailed studies that explain how trees impact turf conditions. And there

Up a Tree? Here's How to Get Down

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



DO NOT HESITATE
TO NOTE THAT
ALMOST EVERY
ELITE CLUB HAS
REMOVED TREES IN
THE LAST DECADE

are plenty of architects willing to take the heat off of superintendents when it comes time to making recommendations for tree removal. It's money well spent.

Numbers. Often, those commissioned can give you a general or detailed count of the trees on your property. Don't hesitate to use that number. Count every bloody twig-like thing that looks or smells like a tree. Then add up the number you need to take out. Generally you are going to surprise people with the percentage, which I suspect would never be worse than 30 percent. Well, in Oakmont's case it was higher, but even the members there didn't know the removal would go as far as it did.

You love trees, too. Spackler may get the blame for giving members the impression that you love to kill living things. We know that most people don't enjoy cutting down a tree unless you must. Do not hesitate to mention that you would prefer not to do this, but common sense says there is no other choice.

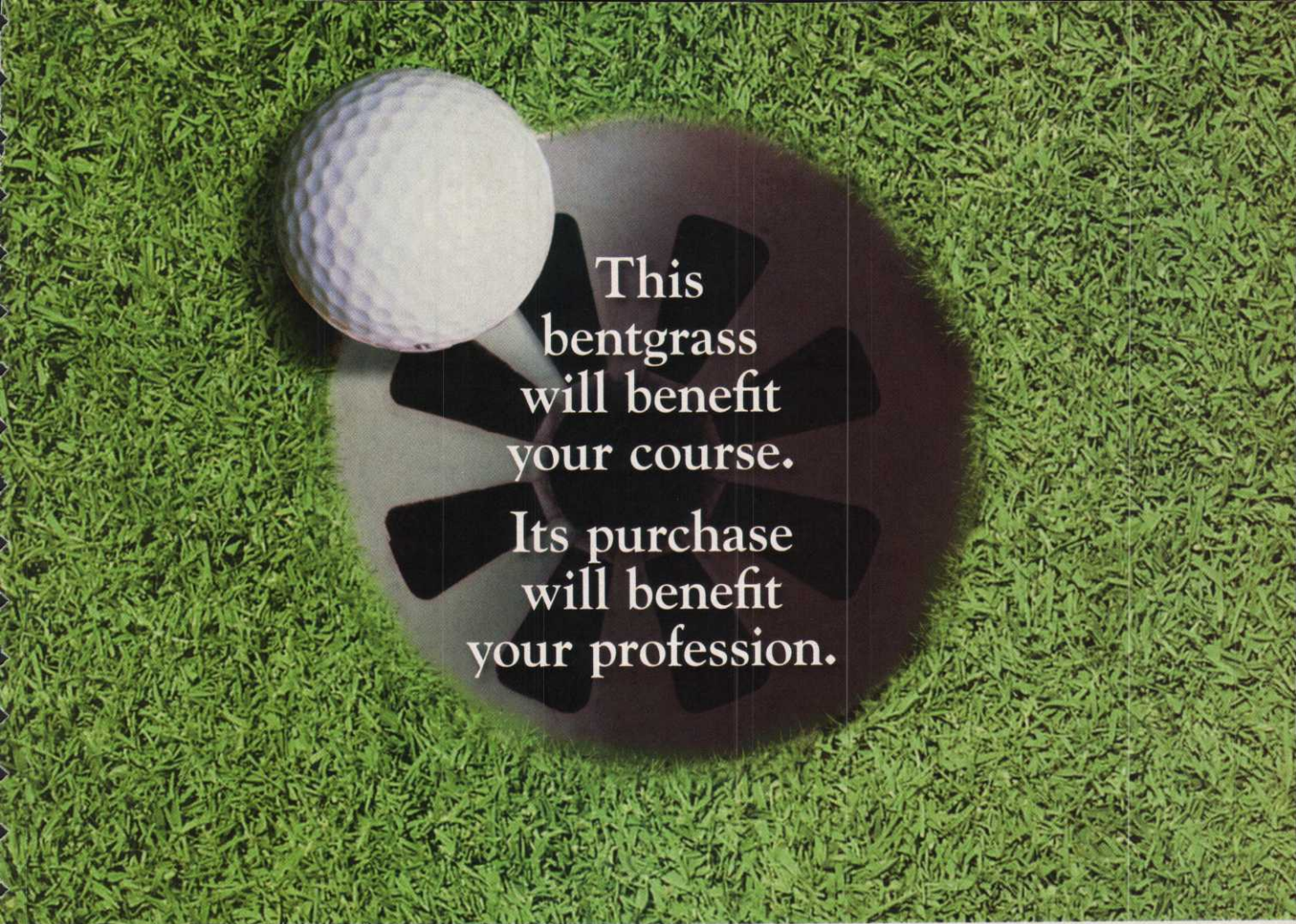
Photoshop. With the advent of this cool Adobe photo-altering program, talented people all over the country are helping courses and architects make strong "before" and "after" tree-removal presentations. Tom Naccarato (tomnacc@sbc-global.net) does some fine work on this front.

Name drop. If everything else fails to convince them, do not hesitate to pull out the rankings and note that virtually every elite club — with the exception of Augusta National — has removed trees in the last decade. Each has been pleased with the results architecturally and agronomically.

Those courses are still great, still beautiful and still the same special places they've always been.

Just with better turf and architecture. Just the way it should be.

Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.



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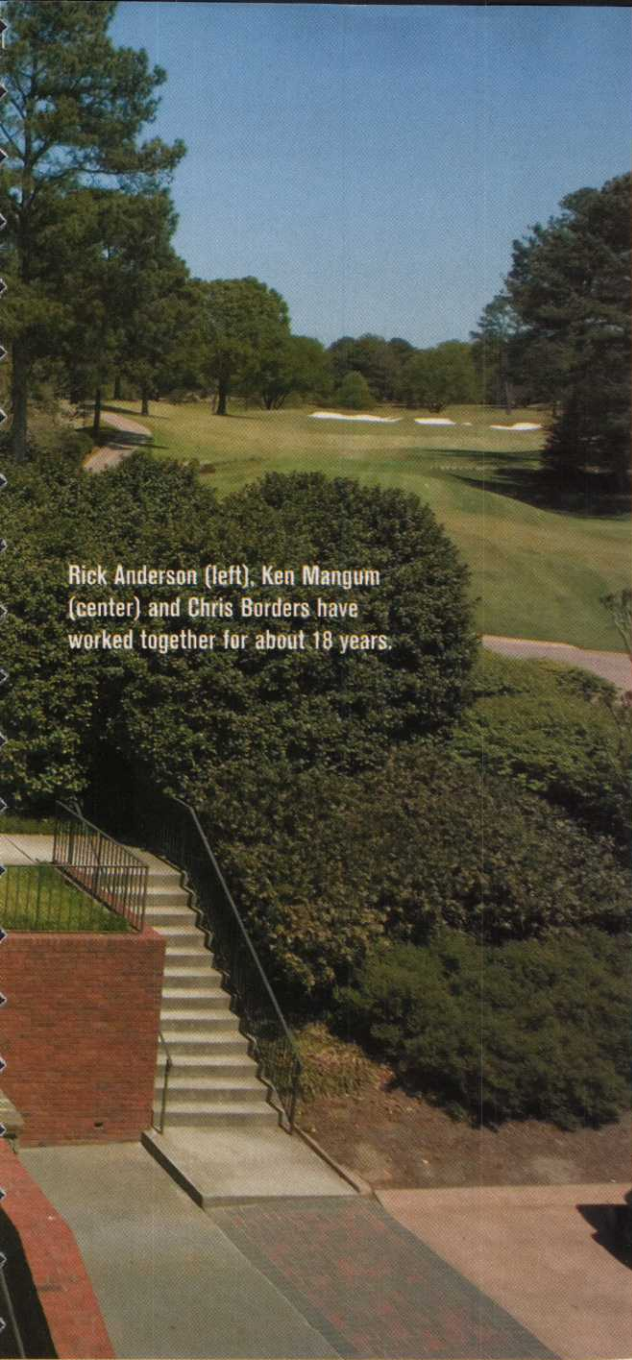


United They Stand

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR IN CHIEF



What they've got going at the Atlanta Athletic Club is something to talk about



Rick Anderson (left), Ken Mangum (center) and Chris Borders have worked together for about 18 years.

The good Lord blessed Ken Mangum with a gleaming grin, which he flashes often. Mangum's job as director of golf courses and grounds at the Atlanta Athletic Club is a central source for his smirking. It has given him many reasons to smile for the 19 years he has been at the club.

And Mangum is not the only one at the Atlanta Athletic Club, the renowned facility located in Duluth, Ga., who's beaming like a kid on his 16th birthday. So are Mangum's co-workers, from the club's director of golf to its general manager, both who have worked there for about as long as Mangum.

There's something remarkable happening at the Atlanta Athletic Club. The people who work there, the ones who make the club's motor whirr, couldn't like their jobs more than if they were playing on the PGA Tour — make that *winning* on the PGA Tour. Many of them have been together since the late 1980s.

Better yet, the nine people who comprise the club's management staff actually appreciate each other's jobs. They are interested in what their respective jobs entail. And they support each other — their unwritten rule is that they will never, ever throw one another under the bus.

What's more, they're friends. They take road trips together, and they play practical jokes on one another. They lean on each other and laugh together.

Yes, there are many reasons for them to smile.

"It's pretty amazing," Mangum says.

But don't think for a nanosecond that the Atlanta Athletic Club is the golf industry's version of Never Never Land. It's not magic that makes this all happen. It's work — hard work. It also takes patience and humility.

Mangum and the others, including General Manager Chris Borders and Director of Golf Rick Anderson, have been able to get along like devoted brothers because they focus on getting along like devoted brothers. They realize the Atlanta Athletic Club is not about them individually; it's about them as a team. Every morning before they enter, they check their egos at the club's doors.

"We've always had the ability to step back and say, 'OK, it doesn't matter about my department and my people, let's do what's best for the club,'" Mangum says. "We realized a long time ago that if the club is successful, we will all be successful."

The Atlanta Athletic Club is as bustling as the Atlanta airport, one of the nation's busiest. The club has about 2,000 member families, so there are 8,000 people coming and going from the club at different times. The club features two 18-hole courses, a nine-hole par-3 course, a practice facility and indoor/outdoor teaching facilities. There is also an athletic center, tennis courts, an Olympic-size pool and four restaurants.

Two men who contributed greatly to the club's modern success are Rene Cote and Gaylord Coan, who in 1988 outlined a plan to transform the Atlanta Athletic Club into one of the best in the nation by hiring top-shelf people to help run it. There was a catch. Cote, the club's president, and Coan, the club's green chairman, wanted people who were interested in working at the club for up to 25 years. They knew it was a grand plan, but they sought to make it work. "We set out to put a management team in place that could work to-

Continued on page 30

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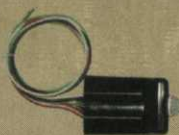
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United They Stand

The management team at the Atlanta Athletic Club realizes the club's success depends on their success as a group. (Back row from left) Rick Anderson, Chris Borders, Brian Marcus and Ken Mangum (Front row from left) Chris Clark, Jimmy Cole, Vincent Longo and Tony Kelley. Darin Armour is not pictured.



Continued from page 27

gether toward a common goal," Cote says.

Cote and Coan wanted managers who would do their individual jobs, but who would also act as a team in the overall operational scheme. When Mangum interviewed at the club, he was impressed when Cote told him about the plan. "It got my attention," says Mangum, who was 35 at the time and was looking for stability in his career.

Mangum was also impressed when Cote made it clear that the club's board of directors would empower the staff to run the club with the board's assistance. Cote's philosophy was to hire good people and let them do their jobs. He knew this philosophy would resonate with his management team. And Cote believed that a happy management team would filter down and shape happy employees throughout the club.

Mangum signed on. So did Borders, who has been in his current position for about 18 years. Borders, who had previously worked at the club for 11 years before leaving for four years, has 29 years in at the club. Anderson joined the club in 1989 with the idea of a long-term commitment.

The three men joined Brian Marcus, the club's tennis pro, who was also hired in 1988, and Jimmy Cole, facilities manager of project management, who has been at the club since 1982 and assumed his current title in 1989. Vincent Longo, director of information, technology and security, was hired in 1990.

Borders is in charge of the management team, which also includes Chief Financial Officer Tony Kelley, who is in his eighth year at the club, and Club Manager Chris Clark, who is in his fifth year. The youngest member of the staff, Athletic Director Darin Armour, is in his fourth year. The veterans still call Armour "the rookie."

Cote credits Borders with keeping the core of the team together for nearly 20 years. He says Borders is an excellent motivator to the managers. "They do a terrific job of communicating to each other and to the board," Cote says. "They've been here a long time, and the members are proud of that."

There is turnover at the club, but many times it's a matter of employees leaving for better-paying jobs, which is fine with Mangum, who wants his staff to move on and up in their careers.

Borders is adding his own chapter to the Cote and Coan plan. The title is "Solidarity." Borders wants his staff to work together like a fundamentally sound baseball team. Perhaps Borders' motivation for that is the memories he has when he worked at the club during his first 11 years.

"Under [that] regime, the golf pro hated the general manager, the general manager

Continued on page 50

Team Builders

Ken Mangum, director of golf courses and grounds at Atlanta Athletic Club, offers these suggestions for successful operations:

- Help each other.
- Cover each others' backs.
- Never say, "That is not our job."
- Give other department employees a hand if they're down; don't step on them.
- Keep each other from being blind-sided.
- Play golf and/or spend time together.
- Organize and define structure for success.