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# Golfdom

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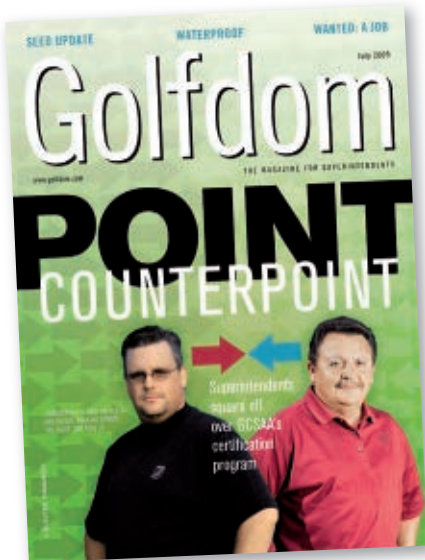
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# We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD



## Readers Make Own Points About "Point/Counterpoint"

I read your interesting article – "Point/Counterpoint: Superintendents Square Off Over the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America's GCSAA's Certification Program" – in the July edition of *Golfdom*. While I find substance in the thinking of both Christopher S. Gray Sr. and Rafael Barajas, I'm more in agreement with Gray. Certification can certainly provide an ego boost and, perhaps, somewhere along the way a career boost, although I have a problem believing the latter. I, too, was a certified superintendent at one time, but I never found one person that received an increase in salary or obtained a position because he or she was certified.

**Gale L. Love**  
Grass Valley, Calif.

Bravo! Great job. I agree with Christopher S. Gray and his points 1,000 percent. Letters after your name and a spray rig full of continuing education units don't make a superintendent. Thanks for your honesty and stating how the majority feels.

**Steve Good**  
Superintendent, Oakmont Golf Club  
Santa Rose, Calif.

You have to be getting a lot of feedback from your "Point/Counterpoint" feature. I don't get

worked up over industry issues such as this, but I guess this story struck a chord. I couldn't agree more with the point Christopher S. Gray Sr. made. I've been a superintendent for 20 years and an 11-year GCSAA member. I worked private golf for 10 years and public golf for 10 years. I've busted my butt for my golfers, my members, greens committees, boards of directors, private owners and myself. I know I'm good at what I do, and I don't care who else recognizes it.

My Class-A status was lost because I didn't have time to attend meetings or the budget to go to the "Show." I'm at work all the time, and I'm being fiscally responsible. I'm being the best environmental steward I can be. I'm a good father and have been a mentor to several younger staff members over the years. Keeping any kind of status or class level has never been one of my career goals. So I don't get invited to any special luncheons or get a pat on the back at a meeting from my peers. Oh well, chances are I'll be at work and unable to attend anyway.

**Thad Thompson**  
Superintendent, Terry Hills Golf Course  
Batavia, N.Y.

Thanks for covering this topic. I couldn't agree more with Christopher S. Gray Sr. and his comments against certification. The GCSAA shouldn't be creating more classifications and separation among its members, but the almighty buck is what drives the decision to do so. You're not better at your job and doing more of a service to your members or customers by attaining certification. Of course, it's important to continue to learn and grow, but that's better done in many ways other than by spending money to be certified by the GCSAA. Most of us want to be the best we can be and this is why we spend our time at the course working on improving the experience with sound agronomics, dedication and passion – not some title. You advance yourself by your performance day after day and year after year – not by a test and a title given out by the GCSAA.

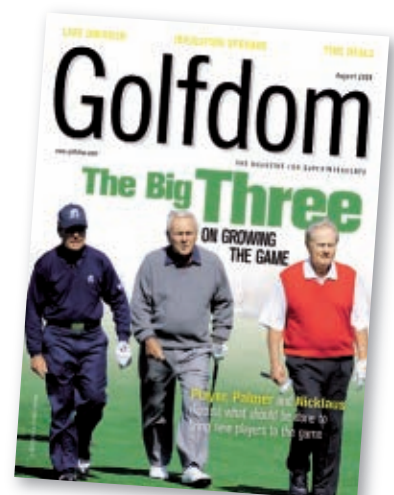
**Doug Brooks**  
Superintendent,  
Denver (Colo.) Country Club

## What Would the Big Three Say to Rowdy Golfers?

I read with interest Larry Aylward's article – "The Big Three on Growing the Game" – in the August issue. It was, indeed, an interesting read whose content was made credible with the responses from Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Gary Player. I believe they reinforced some factors that have been in play for some time.

There is another negative factor that has been growing for several years. I refer to course conduct of both participants and spectators. The conduct of most professionals on and off the course is exemplary, but the crowd conduct at many tour events has become akin to European soccer contests. Fueled by booze and beer sales to boost event revenue, the result has led to a small percentage of the spectators behaving like drunken sailors. Small in numbers as they may be, they're obvious by their boisterous and unruly behavior.

Particularly, the stadium events appear to support or look the other way to the disorderly conduct that takes away from the original congenial and respectful crowd atmosphere typical of the professional golf scene of a bygone era. Even television coverage has picked up on it. The crowd background noise at the recent Buick Open, along with Cialis and Viagra commercials, isn't the best for family viewing. Perhaps Gary Player can shed some light on how we should explain these commercials as we watch these programs with our grandchildren of both genders.



But it's not just the professional scene. I live on a private, non-equity golf course. There has been a growing trend from a small percentage of members who roam the course over-indulged and carry on in a loud, profane and vulgar manner, including relieving themselves in the middle of the fairways. Complaints to the course's owner have fallen on deaf ears as beer and booze sales prevail. I've seen similar conduct on public courses as well.

It's a condition that needs attention. Add these conditions to the mix and it's not surprising the game has lost some of its character and appeal.

**John D. Smith**  
**Concerned Golfer**  
**Stillwater, Minn.**

### Thoughts on 'Deep Thoughts'

While Rick Slattery ("Deep Thoughts" column, June) doesn't think the Democrats (and President Barack Obama) will regulate the golf industry out of business, he neglected to mention that Obama and his Democratic cohorts spent most of Obama's first 100 days in office bad-mouthing American businesses in general and specifically went after the travel, convention and golf industries – going so far as to publicly chastise and berate Northern Trust Corp. for daring to sponsor a golf tournament.

This was a chilling and unprecedented attack on our industry. I suppose Mr. Slattery would view this as nothing more than a harmless "message of change" from our esteemed president. Well, I, for one, don't view it as harmless.

And, unlike Mr. Slattery, I'm not overly concerned about the "global demand" for fertilizer and water, which are essentially local products. I'm far more concerned about whether or not Obama and the Democrats – and their environmentalist supporters – are going to (further) restrict and eventually forbid golf courses from using fertilizers and water, thus regulating us out of business ultimately.

**Dennis E. Bishop**  
**President & CEO**  
**Claremont Golf Course**

### Congrats on Keeping an Open Mind

I wanted to congratulate Ron Furlong on the article he wrote ("Keep an Open Mind") in the September *Golfdom*. I thought it to be the most valuable piece in the issue. Your willingness to get out in front of tough issues, and challenge us by getting us out of our comfort zone, is a sign of true courage and leadership, and is highly valuable to our industry.

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I felt like Clark Griswold after one of his many miscues in the film “Vacation,” like when he plowed the family station wagon through a “Road Closed” sign, took the vehicle airborne and crash-landed it in the red dust of the Arizona desert.

In my case, however, I hadn't backed the packed-for-vacation family vehicle, a Dodge Caravan, out of the garage yet. I had tried that an hour before, but the van's battery was dead. So I drove our other car to the auto parts store, purchased a new battery for the van and brought it home.

“Honey, I'll have this hooked up in no time, and we'll be on our merry way,” I told my wife in my confident, no-problem tone.

My two boys, who couldn't wait to get going, cracked excited smiles. We were headed to Hershey Park, an amusement park in Pennsylvania. But it may as well have been Walley World, considering I was about to transform into the capricious Griswold.

In a hurry to get on the road and get to our destination, I was careless and rushed. I placed the battery in the slot under the van's hood and hooked the cables to the prongs. But then things went haywire. Sparks began flying like it was the Fourth of July. The van acted like it was possessed, with its horn blaring and windshield wipers turning so fast, I thought they were going to fly off their spindles. My wife and kids watched aghast, aware something had gone terribly wrong.

Me, too. But after a few seconds of turmoil, it dawned on me: I hooked up the battery cables backward — negative to positive and vice versa. Unfortunately, those few seconds were all it took to do some serious and costly damage to the van. In my haste to “install” the battery, I managed to blow out the van's alternator, not to mention several fuses. We wouldn't be driving *it* to Walley World . . . I mean, Hershey Park.

Realizing what I did and the damage I caused the van (and my wallet), I lost my composure. I began saying things, and loudly, I shouldn't have said in front of my 9- and 7-year-old boys, whose eyes widened and mouths dropped after hearing my invective.

## Lessons Learned, The Hard Way

BY LARRY AYLWARD



SOMETIMES, MAKE  
THAT A LOT OF  
TIMES, YOU HAVE  
TO STOP AND THINK  
ABOUT YOU'RE DOING

Since we couldn't drive the van, we packed into the smaller car for the trip. Everybody knew dad was peeved and didn't say much the first few hours of the drive. The time allowed me to reflect on my actions. I learned a few lessons.

I learned I must not be in such a hurry to get things done, especially when things require concentration. Sometimes, make that a lot of times, you have to stop and think about you're doing.

I learned I must strive to keep my composure when things don't go my way, especially when in front of impressionable ears and eyes. When I blew up that morning, I realized I was hardly the model father I strive to be.

I learned I must be humble, but not to the point of beating up myself. I felt like a complete imbecile over what happened. The problem was I told myself I was a complete imbecile, too, the next day and the day after that. I had trouble letting go of my mistake. But I realize now that we all make such faux pas.

Finally, I learned I must stop judging others when they make mistakes. I can still hear myself scolding my 7-year-old after he accidentally dropped his Nintendo DS on the kitchen floor last spring, and I had to spend \$50 to get it repaired. I now realize his was an innocent mistake, and he didn't need to hear my lecture about taking proper care of his stuff.

Why am I sharing all of this with you? Because we all find ourselves in these circumstances, at work and at play, and we must deal with them appropriately. I share my story with you to remind you how *not* to deal with them.

By the way, we had a wonderful vacation, especially considering the way it began. We had a wonderful time at Walley World . . . I mean, Hershey Park.

---

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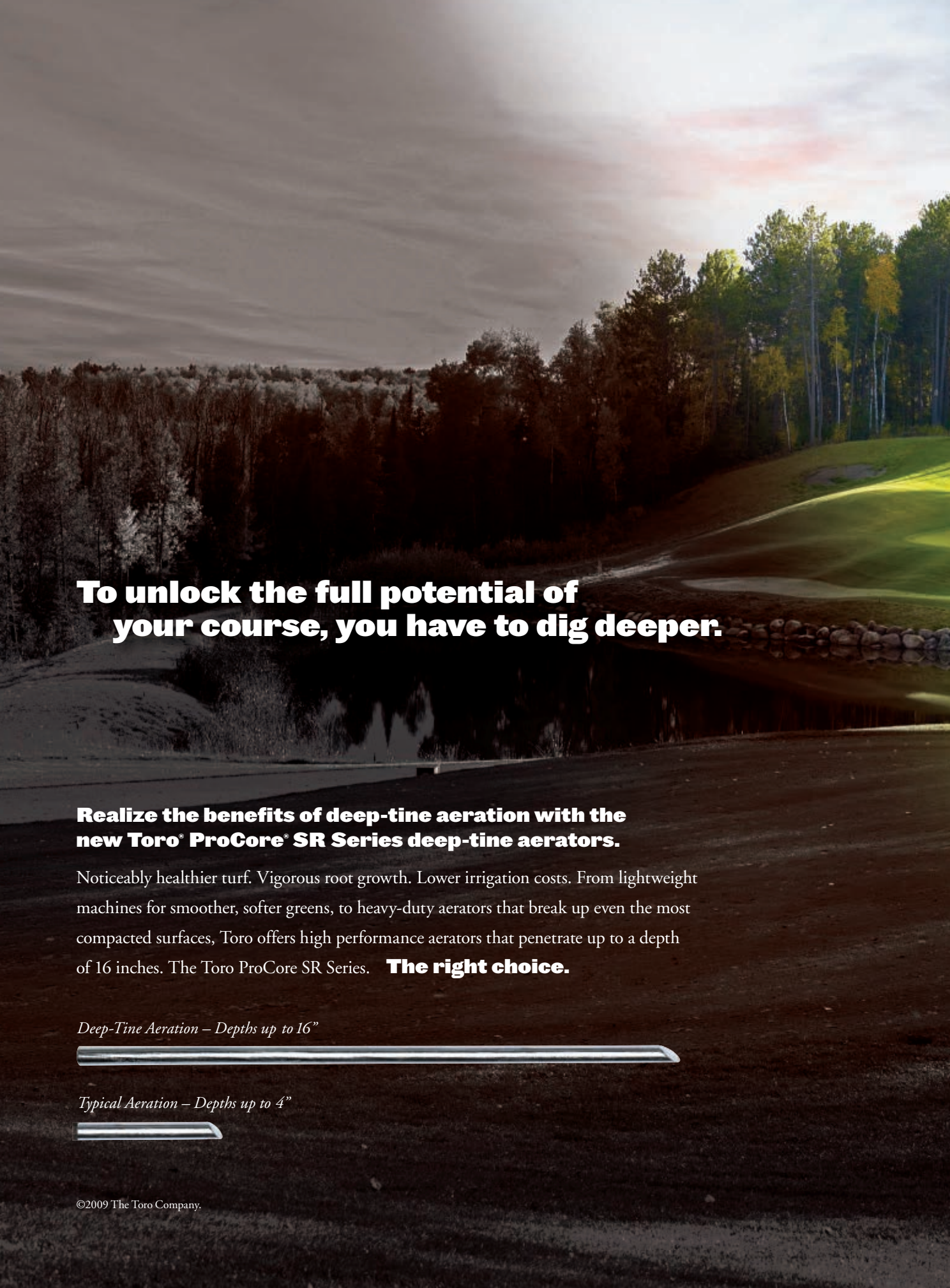
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