

again and re-implement or re-evaluate programs that were eliminated.”

There are strong signs the economy is improving. Unemployment dropped from 10.2 percent to 10 percent last month. But Woodward, realizing the golf business was flat even before the economic downturn, predicts it will remain flat even after the general economic recovery occurs. “The golf industry will lag behind for awhile,” he says.

Woodward wishes he could be more sanguine about the matter, but he can't — at least not right now. “I'm just looking at this realistically,” he says.

To improve business, courses and clubs might need to relax restrictions, such as dress codes, to attract more players, Woodward says. Courses and clubs might also consider more programs to attract families of players.

“I'm starting to hear talk about the need for our industry to look at things a little differently,” Woodward says.

Courses have had to get creative during the economic downturn to attract

*Continued on page 22*



## Sin City Rules

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America decided to relocate the 2012 show from New Orleans to Las Vegas because it said most of its members and partners prefer The Land of the Tumbling Dice over The Big Easy.

Not that *Golfdom* was skeptical of the GCSAA's decision, but we decided to conduct a survey of our own to find out where superintendents wanted to go: Sin City or The Crescent City?

Sin City won by a landslide.

# 72%

of about 250 superintendents surveyed **said they'd rather go to Las Vegas** than New Orleans.



## I Didn't Go to the Show Because ...



After the Golf Industry Show last year in New Orleans, we immediately conducted a survey about the show's attendance. Realizing it was down because of the poor economy, we asked about 125 readers: Why did or why didn't you go to the show? Here's how they answered:

# 55%

I **didn't go** to the show this year because of my course's **financial cutbacks**.

# 29%

I **went** to the show because I go most every year and my course pays for my expenses.

# 12%

I **never go** to the show.

# 4%

I **went** to the show because I go most every year, although I paid my own way this year.

## Tough It Out

*Continued from page 21*

players. Some courses have cut prices to keep players coming, which can pose a dangerous scenario. Once a course slashes prices, it's difficult to increase them back to what they once were.

"I understand people need to do what they need to do in the best interests of their facilities," Woodward says. "There are certain things you can do to have some flexibility on your pricing structure and do what you can to meet the supply and demand issues. But, hopefully, people don't start going too low on those areas."

Woodward is aware some golfers have ditched their private club memberships to play less-expensive public facilities. "It makes sense when you think about it," he says.

The weak golf economy will impact the show's attendance again this year. Square footage of booth space will be down. Woodward hopes as many people attend the GIS in San Diego as they did last year in New Orleans, but projections are lower. About 17,000 came to New Orleans last year, a near 30-percent decline from Orlando in 2008.

But Woodward takes an optimistic

approach in analyzing last year's show.

"Even though numbers were down from a quality standpoint, it was probably one of the better shows we put on in a long time," Woodward says.

While attendance was down, there were still plenty of qualified buyers, Woodward says. Seminar classrooms were also less full, which made for more intimate settings.

"We heard a lot of positive things like that," Woodward says. "But that doesn't translate into dollars. ... We need to do what we can to help us get the numbers up, whether it's square footage on the trade-show floor or getting more seats filled during educational sessions."

While 2009 was the worst year Woodward has seen in the golf industry from an economic standpoint, it's the best year he's seen it from a collaborative standpoint with the GC-SAA's allied associations, which have united to discuss myriad issues, from player development to the environment to government relations. "We're all in this boat together," Woodward says.

It's been a tough year for a lot of people in a lot of industries throughout the world. There has been plenty of contraction and correction. Lessons have been learned — in many cases, the hard way.

But in the long run, what has happened could turn into a good thing, Woodward believes. "It may be something that causes us to reflect back and look at how we can do things better," he says. "Maybe this is the reset button that needed to happen for all of us." ■

**Woodward: "It will get better — there's no doubt about it."**

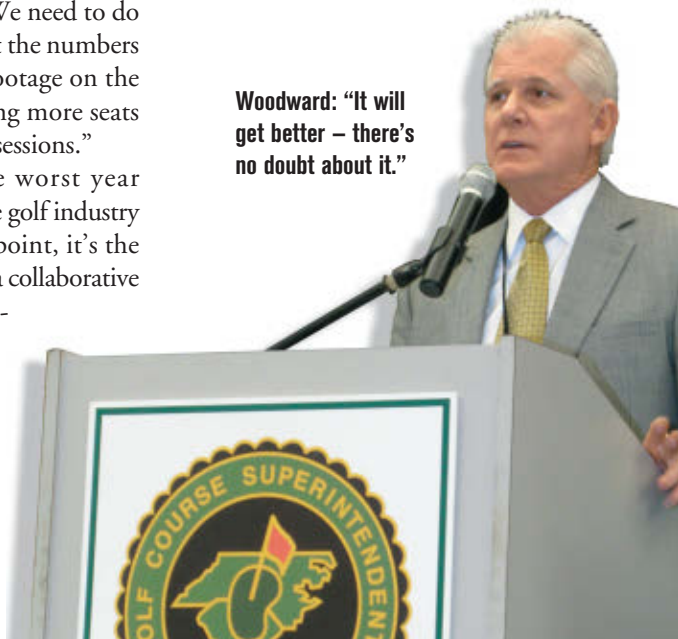


PHOTO BY: LARRY AYLWARD

## Hey CMAA, We Hardly Knew You

**T**he 2010 Golf Industry Show is the last for the Club Managers Association of America, which is leaving the event after only three years.

The CMAA announced in October it was ditching the show because the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America decided to dump New Orleans from the 2012 show schedule in favor of Las Vegas. The CMAA said the GCSAA made the decision in spite of an agreement that it wouldn't do so without consent from the CMAA and the National Golf Course Owners Association, the show's other presenting partner. The CMAA wouldn't concede because it said it had contractual commitments that

would cost its members more than \$300,000 to break them.

But the GCSAA said it will save money in the long run by leaving New Orleans for Las Vegas. And besides, many GCSAA members and vendors don't want to go to New Orleans anymore, the association said.

Mark Woodward, CEO of the GCSAA, said the GCSAA was able to "reduce substantially" its financial commitment in New Orleans after negotiating with hotels to overturn previous bookings.

"Las Vegas will attract more people," Woodward said. "Our vendors like it, and we'll get more people there to offset any loss. It was a good move for us financially and gave

us the best chance to succeed."

Woodward said the GCSAA wanted the CMAA to stay in the show.

"For the long term, it would be better if they were involved with us," he says. "But everybody has to make a business decision, and that's what the CMAA did."

Along with the NGCOA, the CMAA joined the GIS to help make it a stronger show from a financial point. In this case, it was assumed size was better. But Woodward believes the show will be still be strong without the CMAA.

"We don't think it will be a huge impact," he says of CMAA's departure. "We still have other allied associations. I think this will be a strong show for many years. We're going through a cycle now where things are down, and it's a tough time. But we'll survive and get on the other side of this." ■



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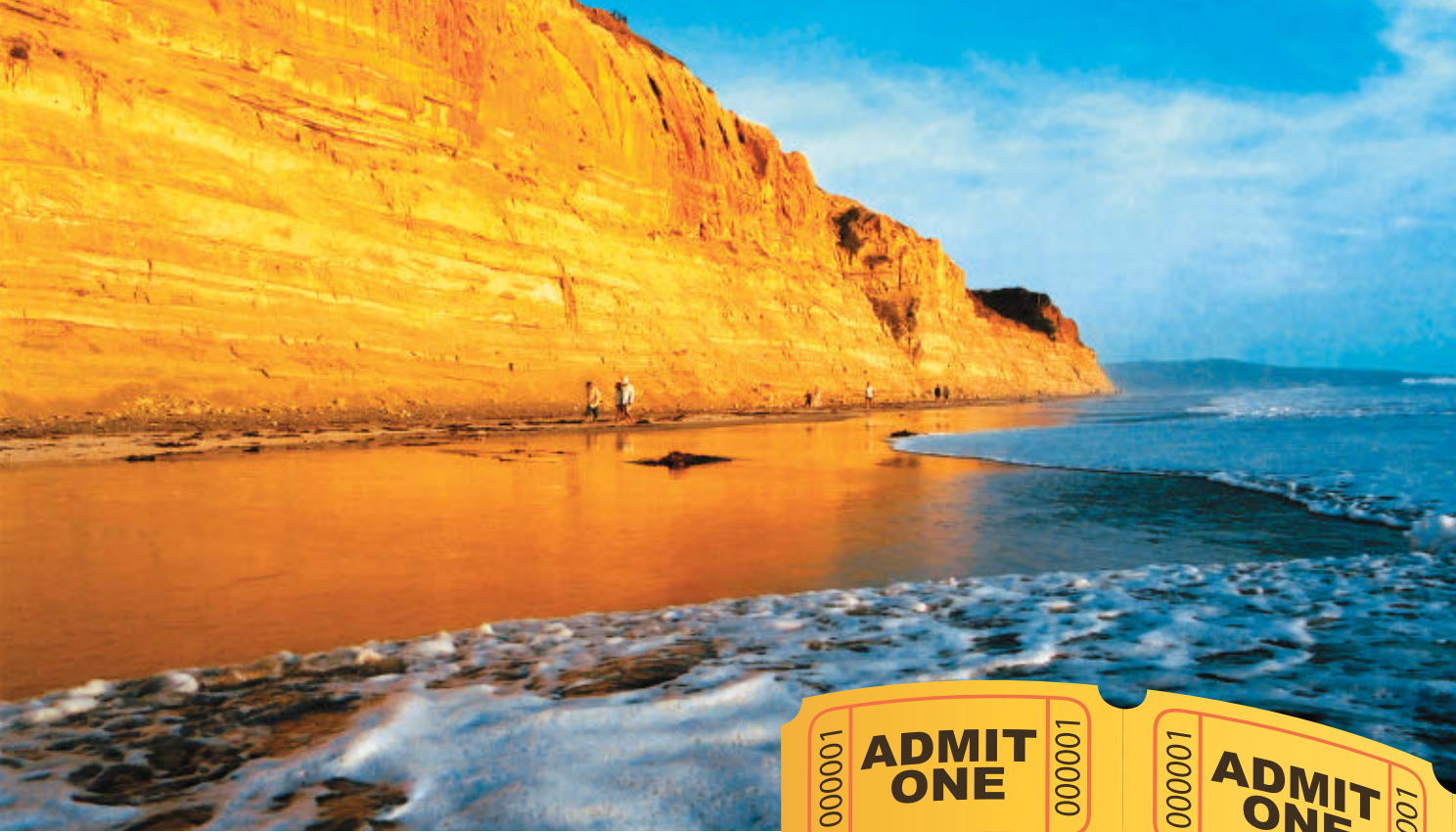
**P R O V E N   S O L U T I O N S**



# Oh, the Distractions!

The worst thing about going to a city like **San Diego** for a convention is there's so much to do. But is that *really* so bad?

BY RON FURLONG, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION (AT LEFT) BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.; PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY: WWW.SANDIEGONORTH.COM

**W**hy do the powers that be behind the Golf Industry Show continue to choose locations such as Orlando, Anaheim and San Diego for their annual event? And now Las Vegas is back in the mix, too.

Come on already! Why can't they choose cities with interesting February weather? I've long been pushing destinations like Omaha, Neb., St. Paul, Minn., and Cleveland for the annual extravaganza — cities that are at their best in February.

Can't you imagine the invigorating air of St. Paul in mid-February? Closing my eyes, I can almost feel the fresh, arctic air coursing through my lungs and a snot icicle forming at the bottom of my nostril as I trudge toward the convention center from my hotel while fighting the cold wind and snow flurries that blind my path. That's what I'm talking about!

Let's take San Diego, for instance, since many of us are reluctantly heading there next month for the show. What can one really do there, outside of the conference?

First of all, the weather will be nasty — 72 degrees and sunny every day. Who likes

that? Boring! Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but you may as well just leave your ice skates and cross-country skis at home. You can't even pack that new winter coat you wanted to show off to your pals.

And then, of course, there's the little matter of attractions. What in the heck are you going to do in San Diego? Does the city have the world's largest ball of twine like that in Cawker City, Kan.? No. Does it have a really cool statue of a lumberjack and his ox like the one in Bemidji, Minn.? Not likely. Can you ice fish in San Diego? I don't think so.

In fact, just for fun, let's try and list some of the things one can do in San Diego as a diversion to the conference. This shouldn't take long:

▲ **Beaches.** I suppose one could head to a beach, if one really wanted to do such a thing. There are Coronado, Imperial, Silver Strand, Mission, Pacific, **La Jolla**, Del Mar, Torrey Pines, Carlsbad and Swamis.

Almost all of these beaches, and a few more not listed, are large sandy landscapes with lifeguard service and some even offer surfing. I guess that would be kind of cool, (clearing throat), if you're into that.

*Continued on page 26*

## Oh, the Distractions!



*Continued from page 25*

▲ **Golfing.** There can't be too many places to golf in San Diego. Well, I mean, except for **Torrey Pines**, of course. And San Diego Country Club and, well, about 100 more courses. Plan ahead and use your connections to get on any one of dozens of great golf courses. But, really, who wants to golf?

▶ **Downtown shopping.** There's the **Gaslamp Quarter**, a 16.5-block renovated historic neighborhood in the heart of downtown, with great shopping and a vibrant nightlife. There's also the Horton Plaza, a beautiful five-level outdoor shopping mall with bright colors and amazing Southwestern architecture. But who wants to shop?



◀ **Family attractions.** When you think of cities to travel to for fun with the family, does anyone ever think of San Diego? What is there? Oh sure, there's Sea World, the San Diego Zoo (maybe the best zoo in the world), Legoland, the **Birch Aquarium**, Balboa Park (the world's largest urban cultural park) and Belmont Park for some great rides. Or you could all go kayaking or scuba diving or whale watching or take a harbor cruise. But can one put these things ahead of, say, Pittsburgh in February? Or a late winter's day in Chattanooga, Tenn?

*Continued on page 29*



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## Oh, the Distractions!



Continued from page 26

▲ **Museums.** And what's a cultural fellow to do in San Diego? I suppose you could wander into the Maritime Museum (for under \$10, by the way) and see five historic vessels. Or find yourself in the San Diego Natural History Museum, the city's premier museum, which was fully renovated in 2001. Or visit the renowned San Diego Air and Space Museum or the San Diego Railroad Museum, which even offers rail tours of California and into Mexico. I suppose a chap could do that, if a chap was so inclined.

▲ **Food.** Who wants good food? Uh, well, I do. San Diego is chock full of great eating, from casual to fine dining. For seafood, I've heard nothing but great things about Turlock's, where your crab is guaranteed to have been crawling across the ocean floor less than 24 hours before you take a bite out of him. It's on University Center Lane. Or enjoy great modern American cuisine while perched atop a skyscraper at Bertrand at Mister A's Restaurant, located on Fifth Avenue. Great Italian food can be found at Baci Ristorante on Morena Boulevard. Of course, there are more casual choices as well, like the Hard Rock Café (on Fourth Street) or one of many great outdoor choices in the beautiful Horton Plaza. A good Web site for restaurant listings and reviews is [www.sandiegorestaurants.com](http://www.sandiegorestaurants.com) — if you really feel like you need to eat.



▲ **Theaters and music.** There's more than you can shake a stick at. If it's a play you're after, you can't do better than the Old Globe or the Balboa theaters. As far as music, take your pick. The House of Blues is legendary. The city is literally filled with music of every kind.

Well, that's that. I hope I cleared that up for you. San Diego is no place to hold a conference. Got it? Join me in backing the push for Des Moines for the next open show slot.

OK, I've got to run. My wife is calling. She wants to know if we're doing Sea World on Friday or Saturday and which day we can fit in the San Diego Zoo. I'd better take the call. ■

*Furlong, a Golfdom contributor, is golf course superintendent of Avalon Golf Club in Burlington, Wash.*

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# Great Expectat

My crystal ball may be a little hazy, but I believe San Diego could hold a bright future for the Golf Industry Show in its sandy, beach-filled hands

**BY CHRISTOPHER S. GRAY SR.,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Everyone can agree it's been a tumultuous year in the golf industry. More courses are still closing than opening, piling up more job losses in an already bleak economy. Some golf course superintendents are being asked to take voluntary time off without pay to help alleviate revenue shortfalls and budget gaps at their facilities. And now we're beginning to see cracks in the unified Golf Industry Show, as the Club Managers Association of America exits after this year's show without even seeing any potential benefits of the newly configured format. With all this chaos surrounding our industry, what's the atmosphere going to be like in San Diego at the GIS set for Feb. 8-12?

After last year's disappointing numbers in New Orleans, everyone is hoping for a sizable

PHOTO (LEFT) BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.; PHOTOS (ABOVE, RIGHT) COURTESY: GCSAA