

◀ Cam Oury, GCSAA CFO, crunches numbers with Evans.

▼ Evans says he expects a heavy workload, but he'll get help from Eileen Bangalan, executive operations administrator.



a criteria. We researched his references thoroughly, and his references were outstanding.”

### Wait and see

Others weren't as quick to get excited about Evans as Mona and Hughes.

“With every CEO who's been hired, I take a wait-and-see perspective,” Mark Esoda, CGCS at Atlanta Country Club, says. “I don't know Rhett. I don't know who they interviewed or where he stood. I am excited that GCSAA has a leader at the rudder.”

Esoda says he was involved in a small way in the search process. He was asked his opinion on what the search firm should look for in the future CEO, but said he was “barely a fly on the wall.”

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## GCSAA CEO

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“Had I been more involved my first reaction would have been, ‘OK, let’s get some backup on this decision,’” Esoda says. “He wasn’t my first choice, just because he got his mentoring from Mark (Woodward). If (the Board) didn’t like what Mark was doing, then why bring on a guy who has to deal with Mark’s history to overcome? I don’t see much of a change.”

Gregg Breningmeyer, group director of sales and marketing for John Deere Golf, says he wonders why it took GCSAA so long to remove the “interim” tag from Evans’ title.

“Rhett was the logical choice. I’m concerned it took them this long to name him CEO... that leads to speculation, and in this industry speculation is not favorable to the GCSAA,” Breningmeyer says. “But at the end of the day, Rhett seems like a capable choice. I think I can speak for the supplier side when I say we all need a strong and vibrant GCSAA.”

Par Aide president Steve Garske says that he barely followed the hiring of the new CEO.

“I’m more concerned with the guy we worked with, Mark Bisbing (former GCSAA director of sales and marketing, who left GCSAA to work for the First Tee) leaving,” Garske says. “He’s gone now, and it’s tough because there’s going to be another new guy we’ve got to break in. (Bisbing) was the guy who communicated with us.”

Esoda says he wasn’t totally surprised Evans got the job, but he didn’t think Evans was going to make it past the final cut.

“I’m not sure what the competition was, but let’s just say if I was a betting man, I would have lost that bet.”

### The qualities inside

Only the GCSAA Board of Directors knows what all the deciding factors were, but one thing is for sure: in Evans, they got a fiery competitor.

Evans is known at the GCSAA as a fierce competitor. Whether it’s something as innocent as a company golf scramble or

“ I think fundamentally the GCSAA needs to take a completely new look at its business model. They can’t just depend on the GIS. I think the GCSAA needs to expand who it serves. Their first job is to serve all the superintendents. But all the suppliers who pay a good portion of the bill need to gain value as well.”

**Gregg Breningmeyer,**  
*John Deere Golf*

“ It’s two parts — he has to gain the confidence of the active GCSAA leadership and the delegates who are on the fringe. The second part is, he’ll have the challenge of every CEO — to prove the value of the GCSAA to the membership. I see the value personally, but that’s a huge challenge.”

**Mark Esoda,** *CGCS,*  
*Atlanta Country Club*

“ There is always going to be a group not pleased with a decision or a policy. You just always have to be ready for that. Resign yourself to that so you’re not in a constant state of angst where you’re agitated with those facts. It kept me composed and gave me a perspective. It seems, in the interactions I’ve had with Rhett, that’s he’s pretty level-headed. He’ll deal with that pretty easily.”

**Steve Mona,** *CEO,*  
*World Golf Foundation*

as serious as an Ironman triathlon, Evans takes all competition seriously.

“I was a wrestler growing up, and that was strictly mano a mano,” Evans says of where his competitive streak comes from. “I have a drive to succeed and a drive to push myself.”

It’s a safe bet that anyone who has ever swam 2.4 miles, biked 112 miles and then

ran 26 miles has a drive to push himself. That’s what every Ironman triathlon consists of, and Evans has done four of them.

Evans says beyond his résumé, he believes the board of directors recognized his passion, his drive to succeed and his results-oriented attitude.

“At this level, everyone is experienced, everyone is educated, everyone’s led orga-



## Advice for the new CEO

“ (Evans) has to have his finger on the pulse of the board. The board is supposed to supply him with strategic direction. He needs to work with them and communicate with them. He doesn’t need to be a rubber stamp — he needs to challenge them — but the directions he wants to take, he needs to sell them to the board first. And if the board comes to him with an idea, he needs to embrace it... he doesn’t have to just do it, but he needs to either figure out how to do it, or how to justify not doing it.

And don’t half-heart anything, either. All-in or all-out. GCSAA can’t do everything, especially now. What are the most important things?”

**Sean Hoolehan,** *CGCS,*  
*Wildhorse Resort & Casino*

“ I think the biggest asset the GCSAA can offer members is their lobbying — if they can protect us from the idiots in Washington. Superintendents want to see some value in what they do for them? There’s value right there.

I think Rhett will be successful if he can just keep them together. Keep their spending down, keep the trade show viable. That’s a big deal. I think people still do like trade shows... I hope they do.”

**Steve Garske,** *Par Aide*

nizations,” Evans says. “What you have to boil it down to is qualities inside that person. No. 1, my passion — golf is more to me than a game, it’s something I’m passionate about. No. 2, I have a sustained drive for success. I can keep it on. In this economy, you have to be able to keep it on. And No. 3, I’m results-oriented. It’s great to build relationships — that’s required of a CEO — but we need results.”

Back in Mesa, City Manager Chris Brady knew of these characteristics — he saw them firsthand in the three-and-a-half years the two worked together.

“Rhett was definitely a high-energy department head. He took on a lot of challenges,” Brady says. “You’re going to find him as very energetic. He’s a hard-worker, but approachable. He’s full of ideas and he’s a great leader.

“I was a little surprised (at the quickness with which he became GCSAA CEO), but even here, he had some high-level opportunities, and he just stood out,” Brady says. “He always does more than you expect him to get done.”

### Do or die

Ask anyone what they see as Evans’ biggest hurdle to overcome for the GCSAA and the answer always comes back almost verbatim: diversify revenue.

“I think his biggest challenge is diversifying the association’s income,” says Sean Hoolehan, CGCS at Wildhorse Resort and Casino in Pendleton, Ore. and GCSAA’s president in 2006. “It relies on the GIS so much. They’ve got to find new revenue streams.”

Randquist agrees.

“The less reliant we are on the GIS, the better off the association will be,” he says. “There are no easy answers. It’s going to take some creative thinking.”

Once again, Evans likes to look his challenge in the eye, no backing down.

“The most exciting aspect to me is that we’re going into a new economy,” Evans says. “It’s a new philosophy of do-or-die. You have to make it work. Some see that as a negative, I see that as a positive.” ■



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# PLANNING & PROTECTING YOUR AERATION PLAN



The aeration is the easy part. Getting golfers and the pro shop to



By Anthony  
L. Williams,  
CGCS, CGM

**A**ERATION... there are few words that strike greater fear and provoke more misunderstanding in our industry. Superintendents are experts in the many agronomic aspects of aeration. They're well versed in the research of Dr. Joe Duich, Dr. Bob Carrow and others pointing to the many positive results of properly timed aeration, such as relieving compaction and the management of organic matter in the primary root zone of putting greens.

A talented superintendent can also demonstrate the multitasking skills of an orchestra conductor during aeration, as all of the elements move in proper sequence from aerator, core harvesting, amendment application, top dressing and rolling. A perfectly planned and executed aeration is a thing of beauty to a superintendent.


However, the tough economic times have

added a new element to the aeration process: protecting the aeration plan. Well meaning property managers have begun causing disruptions in the scheduling and execution of aeration programs. Now the superintendent must not only master the art of aeration, but also know how to protect the aeration plan.

Let's take a look at a few key tactics to defending the aeration plan: scheduling, communication/education, and execution.

## **Aeration scheduling**

The scheduling of aeration is simple from an agronomic point of view: You would normally plan your aeration during the early part of the active growth season of the turf to minimize recovery time and maximize the positive effects to root and overall plant health. This could mean that transition zone courses that have bentgrass greens and



ultradwarf Bermudagrass greens at a multi-course property may be aerating their bent greens in April but not aerating the Bermuda greens until June. If multiple aerations were required during the season you would logically space them far enough apart to keep the grass from experiencing too much stress between aerations.

But this practice has helped give rise to the illusion that we aerate greens when they are at their best and as soon as they are fully recovered (in the eyes of the novice) we aerate them again. The true goal is to schedule aeration to keep the turf in an optimum growing condition.

The complexity to scheduling aeration in today's golf world is the drive to recapture the lost or reduced revenue days that are caused by aeration. Make no mistake, aeration scheduling is all about balancing the business' need for short-term revenue and your responsibility to provide for the long-term health of the agronomic assets (the turf).

These are in conflict now more than



buy into your plan? That's where the *real work* begins.

ever and you are charged with negotiating an amicable solution. Here are five tips to accomplish this:

**Tip # 1:** Involve the entire management team in the aeration scheduling process. Be willing to compromise but be honest about consequences and have everyone sign off on the final schedule.

**Tip # 2:** Post aeration dates at least 18 months in advance and try to make it a rare occasion to change dates and strategies (tine size/type, spacing, etc.) Yes, let the pro shop know your aeration dates this far out. In this new age of tee sheets expanding ever further into the future, you don't want your director of golf trying to argue that a charity tournament was on the schedule first. Your aeration schedule should always be on their first to give you an advantage in the negotiations

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## Plan & Protect



Most superintendents excel at training, but are challenged by communicating to a variety of groups.

*Continued from page 27* that will surely come up.

**Tip # 3:** Be sure the aeration schedule is posted everywhere in your communication network such as tee sheets, newsletters, websites and social media sites.

**Tip # 4:** Keep accurate records from year to

year to use as a planning tool in future years, tracking both the effectiveness of the aeration and the financial impact.

**Tip #5:** Develop a comprehensive education program to help every stakeholder understand the positive results of your aeration program.

At the end of the day an aeration schedule is only as strong as the individuals who buy into its importance, so make sure this critical area is covered with the complete buy-in of the entire operation.

### Spreading the message

Education and communication are critical to the success of your aeration plan. This concept goes far beyond the training of your maintenance staff to actually perform the task of aeration. Most superintendents excel in training, but it is the concept of educating and communicating with a variety of groups that can be challenging.

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## Plan & Protect

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**Aeration** is the process of turf cultivation that uses either **coring** (tines that are either hollow or drill units and aerate to a depth of 3 to 4 inches or 8 to 10 inches respectively) or **punching** (solid tines that penetrate the soil ranging from 3 inches to 18 inches) to relieve soil compaction. Coring allows for the reduction of organic matter content (critical in the management of sand-based putting greens) by removing the cores that are produced either by hand or mechanically. **Blowing** (with backpack or other mechanical blowers) is useful for the removal of smaller particles. Tines are the replaceable metal parts that attach to the aerator and come in a variety of metals and sizes. Hollow tines that are used in coring are measured in either Outer Diameter (OD) or Inner Diameter (ID) and can be either top eject or side eject. A 0.5-inch ID tine will make a larger aeration hole than a 0.5-inch OD tine and a side-eject tine ejects core material faster than a top-eject tine to prevent clogging. Aeration is often accompanied by **topdressing**, which is the application of sand or other material to the treated area. Topdressing fills the aeration holes and helps smooth the surface and is one of the best biological controls for **thatch**, a layer of dead and living organic tissue. **Rolling** is a mechanical process that smoothes the turf surface. These processes will help us keep our turf healthy and provide quality playing surfaces throughout the golf season.

*Continued from page 28*

To give an aeration program the best chance of success during these tough economic times, a superintendent must communicate in a common language and spread that message throughout the operation. The purpose is to teach the importance of aeration and the specifics of your aeration plan to all the stakeholders ranging from staff to members/golfers.

Developing a small card with a few key comments about aeration can be helpful, especially for staff members. Include the date and type of aeration (coring with hollow tines or punching with solid tines), tine size and any other agronomic activities planned (fertilizer or topdressing) and an estimated time of recovery (usually 10 to 20 days but it is always better to err on the high side). Include a few key power phrases like, “keeping our greens at their best” or “it’s the best way to erase the effects of 100,000 golf shoe prints.”

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