

Go Home

sional development,” Kreger says. Consequently, he adds, clubs are making superintendents pay for the GIS out of their own pockets instead of the club paying for it.

Kreger says if he was a superintendent at a low-budget course and the money to attend a show came out of his own pocket, he'd choose the local show because it offers just as many benefits as the national show.

“When you're looking at percentages, clubs are paying more for superintendents to go to regional shows instead of national shows,” Kreger says. “They're relying more on

regional shows for educational opportunities. The cuts in budget and the opportunity for education at regional shows is making for the perfect storm.”

Brent Fuhrman, CFO and COO of FarmLinks, the research and demonstra-

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tion facility in Alabama, says regional shows and industry events such as those FarmLinks hosts do not prevent superintendents from attending the GIS.

"We just do not see ourselves as a competitor of the GCSAA," he says. "We are a complement to the overall educational desire in the industry... Obviously, when you're dealing with the economic realities in the industry and the demands on people's time personally and professionally, there are decisions people in the industry have to make on where they're going to spend their time."

FarmLinks and the Golf Industry Show offer two different things, Fuhrman says. FarmLinks allows for close interaction and deep conversation among colleagues seeking solutions to problems. National shows, on the other hand, allow superintendents to see all the options available to them.

"From my perspective, what's great about all these shows is you have an opportunity to see the breadth of options of what is available. There's a negative in that too in that you can't dig deep simply because of the time it takes to get around. You go wide but you can't go deep at a show," he explains. "But again, if I'm trying to get (educated) I think a show nationally or regionally makes a lot of sense."

Change your model

Another potential enemy of a national trade show: the internet.

Mark Woodward, president/owner of Mark Woodward Associates, LLC, a golf operations consulting firm, and a former CEO of GCSAA, says that on-line education caught on with the implementation of the association's Professional Development Initiative.

"That was about attainable, affordable education, so members could maintain their status as a Class A or certified member," Woodward says. "People can now take online classes and easily get points at the local level. You can maintain your status by staying home."

Mona agrees the internet has changed the way business has been conducted in the last five years.

"People don't just jump on planes and fly halfway across the country to have a lunch meeting anymore," he says. "People are much more conservative in how they use their time and their resources."

Hard times

Another major issue hurting the show is the cost of attending. It was the main obstacle that could keep people from attending, according to a *Golfdom* survey (see page 25).

"I know a lot of superintendents out of work right now. In my mind, the show is still something people should try to go to," Wood-

KEEPING
THE GIS
STRONG

WE ASKED FOR ONE BIT OF ADVICE TO THE GIS, AND THIS IS WHAT WE HEARD.

TIM KREGER
executive director,
Carolinas GCSA

Condense. That's my one-word answer.

When you have a golf tournament and then you have the trade show, too, you could potentially be gone from your job for 10 days. People's time is way too valuable these days. We shrunk our conference from four days to three days four years ago and it was the greatest thing we ever did. Our vendors and the members really appreciated it. It benefited both sides equally.



STEVE MONA
CEO, World Golf Village

Stay in tune with what is going on in the world generally, and in the golf course management industry specifically. And don't be afraid to try some things that are innovative that maybe aren't tried and true but could break some new ground.

Maybe get ahead of what people think they want. That was the beauty of the iPod—we didn't know we wanted it until we saw it.

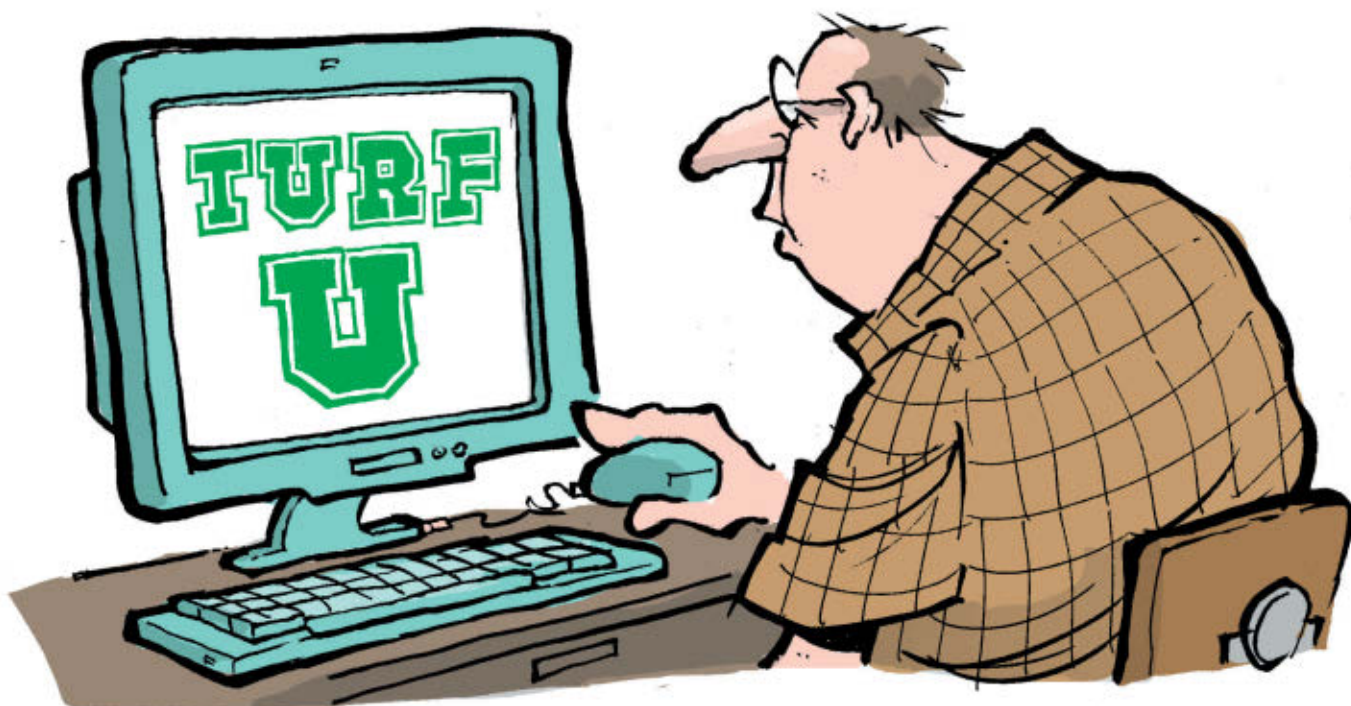


MARK WOODWARD
President, Mark Woodward
& Associates

The GIS needs to be relevant and the superintendent needs to convince the owner that it's a value-added experience to spend that time away from the golf course.

When a golfer plays your facility, you often have a value-add so when he pays, he feels he got more out of his money. The GIS needs to make sure superintendents get that value-added experience, so they can show the owners it was worth the investment.





ward says. "But I fully understand the flip side of the coin. As I've traveled around I've heard comments like, 'I can't afford to go if my club isn't sending me.' And if they can afford it, they can't afford the time away from the course."

"When you hear of (attendees) having to minimize their travel expenses and share rooms because they're paying out of their own pockets, that's a recipe for disaster," Justin Apel, executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America, says. "I think if the courses made the investment they would see immediate results. That owner, manager or operator ought to attend with the superintendent, because it's a team effort. There's just as many educational opportunities for them to attend. And then on the show floor, it's a team approach."

Until last year, FarmLinks surveyed superintendents attending its events on their views of the GIS. According to Fuhrman, leading up to the 2011 GIS, 43 percent of responding superintendents said they were skipping the show because of club budget cuts.

But the 2012 show will be different, Fuhrman says.

"I feel there is pent up demand for this particular show," he observes. Whereas club budget cuts stopped supers from attending the 2011 GIS, he says, "now there is certainly some possibility that people have been holding

off on buying equipment. So now they are in a position where they're going to make some major capital purchases. They now have needs they need to address."

Evans is confident that this year's show will at least be bigger than last year's show — and that's a move in the right direction.

"I think people hunkered down for a little while and said that the timing wasn't right," Evans says. "We're starting to see that come around. People have gone through that life cycle and they're saying, 'OK, I need to get back in the swing of things.' Our seminar seats are higher by 12 percent. That's a good sign."

Shorten the show?

Evans says that the GIS is like the GCSAA's Super Bowl. There are a lot of practices and games that lead up to that one moment. "I love it because I can go out and attend chapter meetings, meet members, and then there's a culminating event where we can all come together," he says.

Evans plans to take care of the big game, and he is happy to say that he's been thinking about how the GIS can be changed for the better.

"The first thing we're looking into, and it's a key factor in bringing people together, is time. I think for the most part, budgets are

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Superintendents don't have to travel to the national show to get CEUs anymore. Much more convenient, they're also available at the click of a mouse.

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stabilizing,” Evans says. “But what they’re not given any more of is time. There’s only so much time in a day.”

Evans adds that the show may be too long, considering that from the beginning of the GCSAA Golf Championship to the end of

the educational conference, it’s possible a superintendent could be away from his course and his family for 9 to 10 days.

“That’s an extremely hard thing for people to do. How do we compress the week and consolidate things? Are there items that need to be overlapped? There might be choices you have to make during your stay,” he says, “but you have to shrink down the amount of time it takes to attend the show.”

Mona says he’s seen it firsthand with the Golf 20/20 meeting. Ten years ago, the meeting was 2-and-a-half days. Last year’s meeting was only seven hours long, he says, and yet half the group of 115 left at lunch. He plans on cutting the 2012 meeting to four hours.

“We’ll run it from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., then we’ll say ‘Here’s lunch if you want it, if not, have a great rest of your day,’” Mona explains.

Evans says that a condensed GIS schedule is still at least two years away. Contracts for the GIS — with convention centers, hotels, golf courses — are signed a few years in advance. But he sees that a change to the schedule could come as soon as 2014.

Making the most

What 2012 and Las Vegas holds for the Golf Industry Show remains to be seen. But Mona believes that the GCSAA is doing all it can to keep the show relevant.

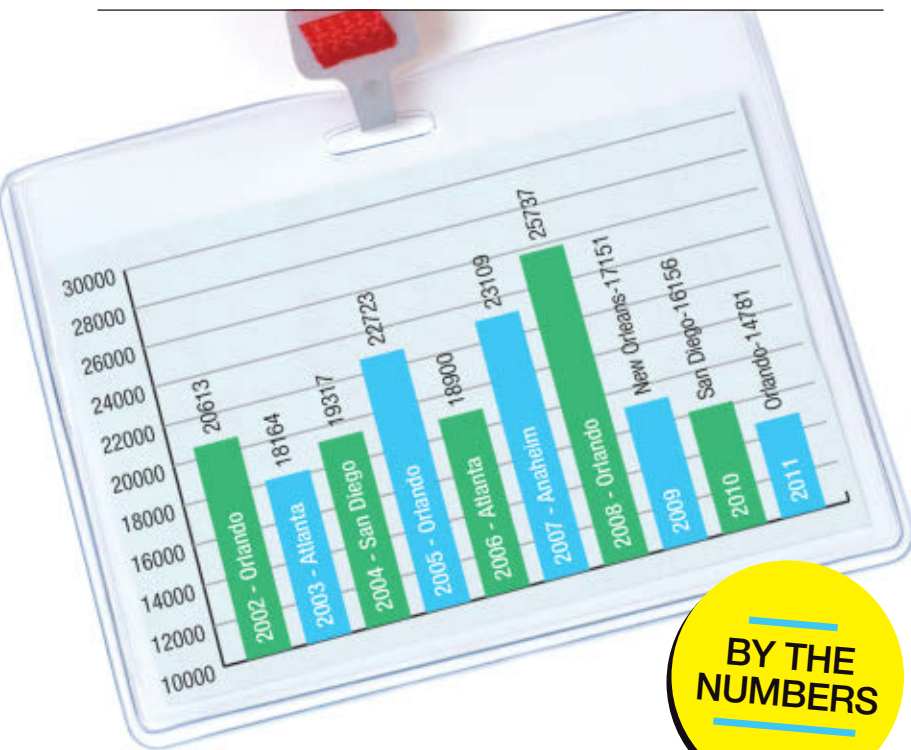
“During my tenure, we had it boiled down to three cities — Orlando, New Orleans and San Diego,” Mona recalls. “I’ve noted that Las Vegas and San Antonio are back in. I give GCSAA credit for going to cities that members want to go to.”

If the show never gets back to 300,000 square feet, that might not be the worst thing for attendees.

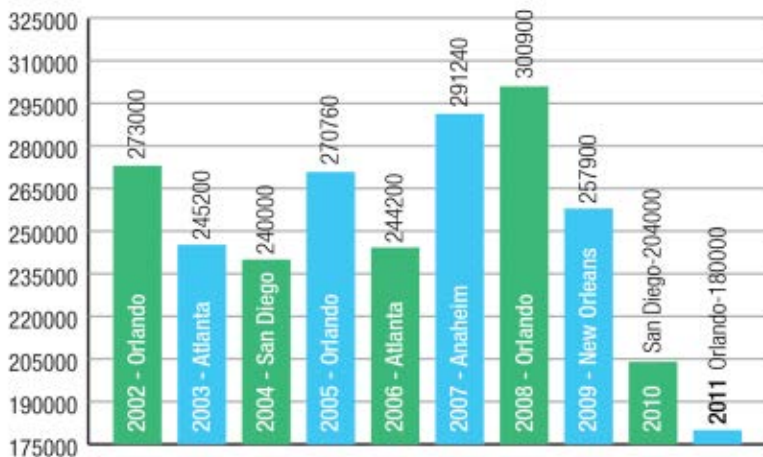
“Obviously the smaller shows would have a financial impact on the association’s revenue, but I’ve talked to a lot of superintendents who don’t mind the smaller shows of the last few years,” Woodward says.

“Until there’s more rounds, more revenue in the industry, our show is going to stay the same,” Evans says. “Is that a good thing or a bad thing? We’re making the most of it. We’re totally content with where it’s at.” ■

GCSAA CONFERENCE AND SHOW ATTENDEES



TOTAL TRADE SHOW FLOOR SQUARE FOOTAGE



Source: www.golfindustryshow.com/aboutgis.asp and Golf Course Management

SUPERS SPEAK OUT:

The GIS Survey

The education is still vital, and the price of attending the Golf Industry Show is the one thing that might keep a superintendent from attending. Those are just a few of the things we learned from our readers.

But how many readers believe that the Golf Industry Show will return to its heyday of the mid-2000s? How many readers wouldn't miss the GIS for anything? Which is more popular, the national show or your regional show?

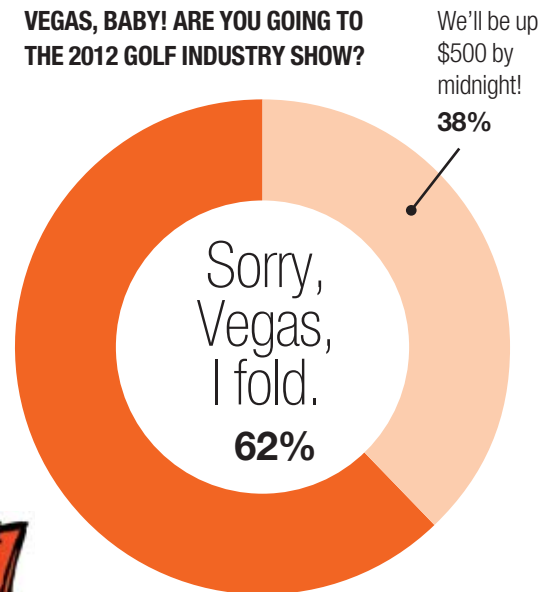
All of these questions were answered in late January, when *Golfdom* sent out a survey to its readers and asked them 8 questions about the Golf Industry Show. We were thrilled to receive a whopping 867 responses to the survey. From chatter in the industry, people from maintenance facilities on the coasts to GCSAA brass in Lawrence, Kan., were looking forward to seeing the results of our survey.

Thank you to everyone who filled out the survey. One lucky participant was rewarded with a \$100 gift card. Look for another *Golfdom* survey soon — this next one will ask superintendents to give their honest opinions on the effort and capital it takes to maintain putting greens.

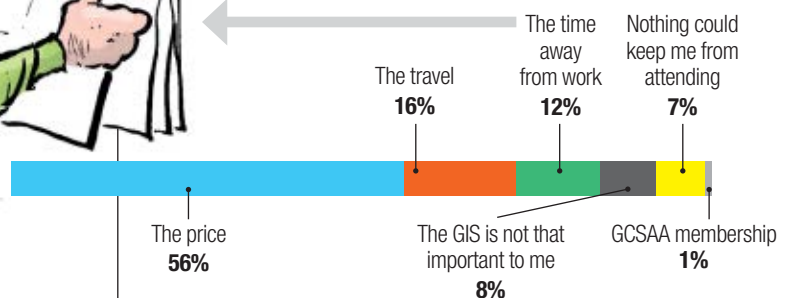
And now, the results of our GIS survey...

GOLFDOM READERS SHARE THEIR OPINIONS ON THE STATE OF THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW, FROM HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO THEIR CAREERS TO THE ONE THING MOST LIKELY TO KEEP THEM FROM ATTENDING. **BY THE GOLFDOM STAFF**

VEGAS, BABY! ARE YOU GOING TO THE 2012 GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW?



WHAT'S THE PRIMARY THING THAT COULD (OR DOES) KEEP YOU FROM ATTENDING THE GIS?



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Survey Says...

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"The educational seminars are awesome, and the networking opportunities are immense. The trade show continues to keep me busy. I think the timing aspect, it may be good for people on the East Coast, there are areas on the West Coast — that's prime time for some people. Palm Springs, Arizona, that's their season. They should think about moving the timing."

MARK BURCHFIELD, superintendent,
Victoria Club, Riverside, Calif.

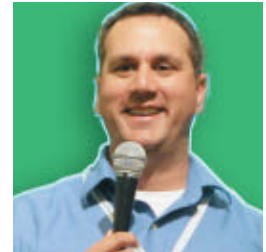


IN RECENT YEARS THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW ATTENDANCE HAS BEEN DROPPING AT AN ALARMING RATE. IF YOU WERE GCSAA CEO FOR A DAY, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO TRY TO HELP THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW STOP THE BLEEDING?



"I think the GIS needs to become more affordable. I think the golf tournament itself plus the actual conference need to be combined into an area where it's affordable for everyone to go."

TOM LIVELY, CGCS, TPC San Antonio



"I would stop the GIS show and do maybe four or five big regional shows. That would cut down on travel expenses and be more pertinent to where you're at."

DAMON DI GIORGIO, superintendent,
Fieldstone Golf Club, Wilmington, Del.

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"It's hard to say, but I think GCSAA needs to do more one-on-one events and CEUs are too easy to get nowadays. It used to be you went to the (GIS) to get CEUs. Now you go to the local organizations, where you can get CEUs monthly, or even through webcasts."

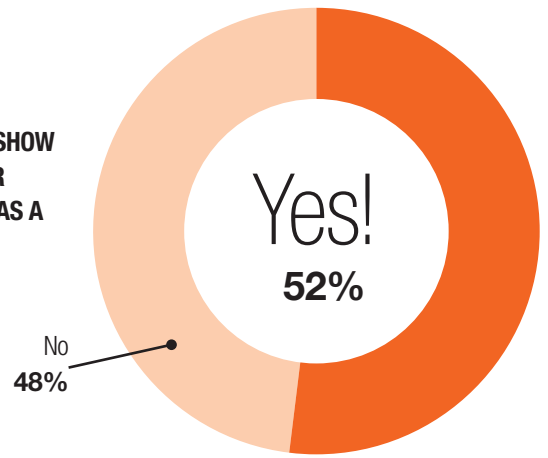
KIRK DOLAN, Turfgrass Director
Louisville Metro Parks



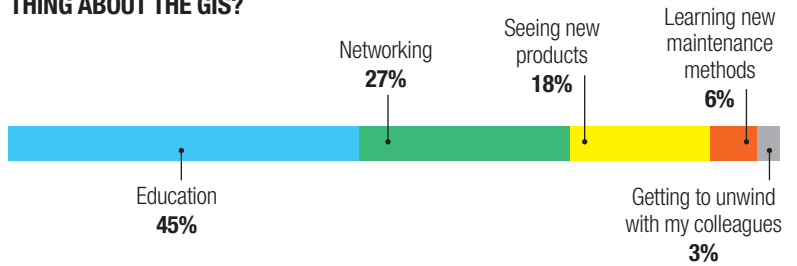
"I would try to have more events like (the *Golfdom* Summit,) where it's one-on-one."

ROBERT CAREY, superintendent,
Spring Brook Country Club, Morristown, N.J.

IS THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW AS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CAREER TODAY AS IT WAS A DECADE AGO?



OK, WE'RE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAVID FEHERTY TALK AND THE CHAPTER RECEPTION. BUT WHAT'S REALLY THE MOST VALUABLE THING ABOUT THE GIS?



Continued on page 29



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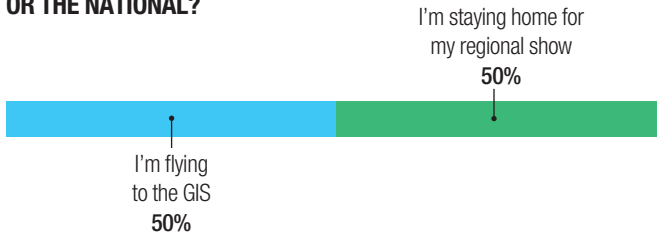
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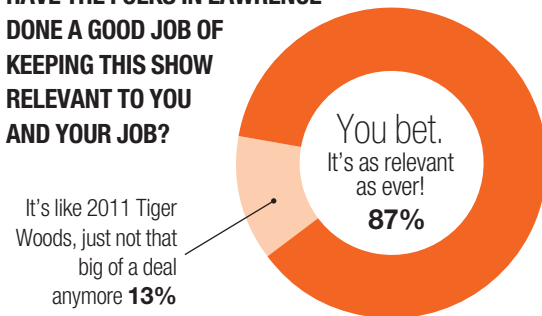
Survey Says...

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DECISION TIME. THE GM SAID YOU CAN GO TO ONE SHOW, BUT NOT BOTH, IN 2012. ARE YOU GOING TO YOUR REGIONAL SHOW, OR THE NATIONAL?



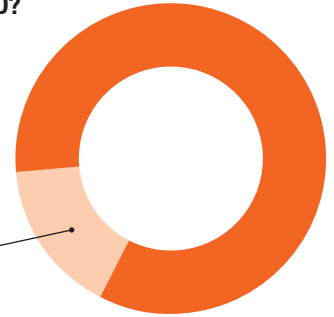
HAVE THE FOLKS IN LAWRENCE DONE A GOOD JOB OF KEEPING THIS SHOW RELEVANT TO YOU AND YOUR JOB?



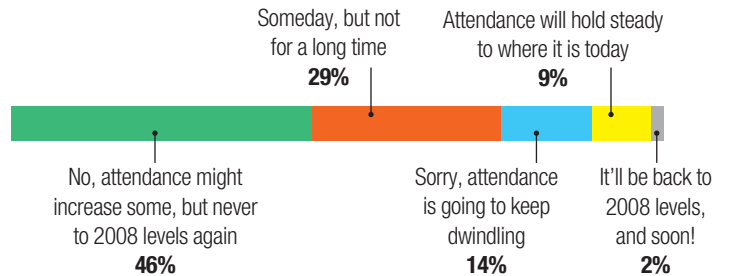
THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW IS LATER THAN USUAL THIS YEAR (FEB. 29TH-MARCH 1ST). HAS THE LATE DATE AFFECTED YOUR DECISION TO ATTEND?

It's not on Christmas or my wife's birthday, right? Then it's cool
84%

They're messing with my Spring prep by holding it so late!
16%



THE GIS ATTENDANCE HAS PLUMMETED IN RECENT YEARS. DO YOU THINK THE HEYDAY OF 2008 WILL EVER RETURN?



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THE *Golfdom* CONVERSATION:

David Feherty

GIS 2012
SPECIAL

GOLF'S HOTTEST
FUNNYMAN TALKS
ABOUT SPEAKING
AT THE GOLF
INDUSTRY
SHOW, GOLFER
EXPECTATIONS
AND THE ONE TIME
A MOWER GOT
AWAY FROM HIM.

BY SETH JONES

