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My Second Office

BECAUSE THE COURSE IS YOUR FIRST

About our host

TOM EGELHOFF is the Director of Agronomy at the Club at Las Campanas in Santa Fe, N.M. The avid greenthumb transferred his talents from Ohio to Las Campanas, where the weather is almost too good, with 320 days of sunshine a year.

Egelhoff began his education at The Ohio State University, studying turf. However he was interrupted when his Ohio Air National Guard Unit was called in for Desert Storm. After completing his service, Egelhoff completed the two-year professional turfgrass management

program at Rutgers University. He worked at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio for 10 years before making the move to New Mexico as Superintendent and then Director of Agronomy at Las Campanas.



“Working 10 years at Muirfield under Mike McBride set me up for my career. We learned a lot there.”

- 1 WHO STOPPED THE RAIN?** I spent 10 years at Muirfield and it rained every year. Thought it was cursed. In New Mexico, it never rains, so this is meant to bring rain.
- 2 HE'S NO. 1** This (fantasy football league) started in 1993 with people who worked at Muirfield. There's a group of 10 of us who have done fantasy football for 20

years. Whoever wins it, gets the trophy for a year. I've had it for three years.

- 3 PREFERRED READING** I would say (I've been reading *Golfdom*) since the early 2000s when I was still in Ohio. I like them, you can pick up tips from around the country. I'm sensitive to water conservation being in the Southwest, so I'm always looking for those articles.

- 4 COACH HAYES** I was a student at Ohio State University when (Hall of Fame Ohio State football coach) Woody Hayes died. That's the student paper from the morning after he died.

- 5 GOLDEN BEAR** Jack Nicklaus signed that when I left Muirfield. That was my going-away gift, along with a set of Gore-Tex rain gear that I have used only three times in 10 years.

- 6 IT'S ABOUT THE BIKE** Everybody in this industry is exposed to stress. I use that to get out and relieve stress. I've put 2,500 miles on that bike since April.

BY MOLLY GASE // PHOTO BY CHAD HINDERLITER
Proud of your second office? Email us a photo of you in it to sjones@northcoastmedia.net, and we may feature you and your office in an upcoming issue of *Golfdom*.

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“There are more signs each day that point to the fact that cities may want to consider getting out of the golf course management/operation business.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

Maybe time for a change

I was at a golf conference a few weeks ago and I heard something that I never really had put a lot of thought into. But once I heard it, it made perfect sense. One of the speakers reminded the audience that the largest group of golf course owners in the United States is municipalities. I think he mentioned that there are over 2,000 municipally or government-owned golf courses in our country. This number is significantly larger than any other one specific ownership group.

If you really think about this it's true. There are cities all across the United States who own and manage at least one golf course and also a number of larger cities that own and manage up to as many as eight golf courses and possibly more.

Although the topic of this speaker's session was not specifically about municipal golf, this one statement rang a bell with me because I've spent the majority of my career in this sector of the golf industry.

The phenomenon of municipalities owning golf courses is not surprising. Cities feel an obligation to provide their residents with lifestyle amenities that enhance the livability of a particular city. Golf and recreational opportunities in general can and do play a significant role in this concept.

One of the problems is that a large segment of the population may take part in a wide array of recreational and cultural activities within their communities, but in most locations only about 10 percent (+/-) of the people play golf. This statistic alone puts golf in a precarious situation when it comes to community support and most importantly, funding. This problem drastically affects all the other types of golf courses as well (private, daily fee, resort, etc.) but that's for another column.

In many cases it may make good sense for municipalities to own golf courses because they do play a significant role in a community's assets and amenities. But there are more signs each day that point to the fact that cities may want to consider getting out of the

golf course management/operation business.

There are many reasons for this, but first and foremost, in today's economy it is more and more difficult for cities to find the necessary funding to continue to do things the way they did in golf's heyday (in the '80s and '90s). Also, in most cases it is more costly for cities to maintain/manage golf courses simply because of their wage scales and benefits packages.

In the past when golf rounds were up and costs were lower, cities could generally keep up and sustain a golf system that would at least break even and hopefully make a nominal profit. But since most municipalities have struggled drastically the past several years because of the economy, many have come to the conclusion that they need to oper-

ate differently.

Now, just like everything, there are exceptions to this rule. There are cities that have highly successful golf operations. But the fact is, many municipalities across our country are struggling with their golf operations.

Politically and for public safety reasons it is more important for cities to use their appropriated funds for things like police, fire, sanitation and other items that we as Americans have come to expect our cities to provide. These items are for the good of the entire community and not just a select group.

I'm not saying every municipality should get out of the golf management business. I'm just suggesting that in light of our economic times and the important issues that cities face with funding, there may be situations where it makes perfect sense to look at the their golf operations differently.

The reason I say this, and this is coming from someone who has been in municipal golf for most of his life, is because I understand the important role that affordable and accessible golf plays in growing our game and creating new golfers. I would hate to see this segment of our industry go away because then rounds and revenues would decline even further than they already have.

Mark Woodward is a senior vice president for OB Sports, principal of DaMarCo Golf, president of Mark Woodward and Associates and a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.



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“While many are adopting the state model, the activists have nothing better to do than to court the media and give distorted, one-sided versions of the water quality issue.”

JOEL JACKSON, *Contributing Editor*

Putting greens and politics

Thanks to some of the recent legislation and regulation filtering down from Washington to city councils, Big Brother is endorsing and/or passing laws that will affect what products can be used on golf courses, and when and where others can be applied.

Politicians tend to placate the vocal minority who call for bans on the use of fertilizers during the summer “rainy season” months, especially in the Sun Belt sections of the country. Decades of independent research has shown that during the peak growing season, turf and landscape plants utilize all but a very small fraction of the applied nutrients.

Conversely, when nutrients are applied during the slower growth periods like the spring and fall, as mandated by many of the proposed bans, the health and vitality of the turfgrass declines and the amount of nutrients lost rises significantly as the turf thins out. This fact has been most recently documented by an 8-year nutrient management

study done by the University of Florida using funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

In 2005, the state of Florida passed the Urban Fertilizer Rule which limited the amount of nitrogen and phosphorous in fertilizer blends sold to homeowners. It also limited the amount of N and P that could be applied per application, per year on golf courses and sports fields. In 2007, Florida then passed the Model Fertilizer Ordinance. This reinforced those stewardship practices and required any county or city to consult with the State Department of Agriculture and the University of Florida scientists if they wanted to draft a more restrictive fertilizer ordinance.

Activists began calling for an all-out war on water quality in 2008 on Florida’s west coast in the Sarasota area citing nutrients as a leading cause of “red tide.” Red tide is the common name for large blooms of brown algae. These occur periodically along the west coast, and have been recorded since the 1800s. Politicians jumped on the bandwagon to “do something” about water quality, as long as it didn’t involve spending lots of money.

Usually, without involving the state or the university, as required in the state ordinance, local governments enacted fertilizer ordinances with seasonal bans on usage. In many of the early ordinances golf courses were given an “exemption.”

The exemption required that superintendents would follow the Golf BMPs, which were published in 2007 as part of a joint effort of the Florida GCSA, the Florida DEP and the University of Florida researchers.

I think this exemption was due in part to the overall efforts of the GCSAA and local chapters in raising awareness of the professionalism of the modern-day superintendent. In several cases local superintendents visited their local commissioners to make them aware of the Golf BMPs.

Advocacy can work, but it is not a guarantee. The west coast wave of ordinances has spread to Florida’s east coast. Like the west coast, counties preempt the state and then cities preempt the county.

While many are adopting the state model, the activists have nothing better to do than to court the media and give distorted, one-sided versions of the water quality issue. While our industry has been spared in most of these laws, the activists publicly declared recently, “Golf is next!”

The green industries in Florida have united and are attending commission meetings and writing letters attempting to bring science to the table. Recently, a newspaper down in Ft. Myers published an article declaring that perhaps the bans were indeed more harmful than helpful. Perhaps there is hope for our side.

Joel Jackson, CGCS-Ret., is a contributing editor for *Golfdom*.

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“Even though it feels like I’m locked in an eternally futile superintendent job search, I would much rather be doing this job than anything else.”

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent, Wedgewood G&CC, Powell, Ohio*

The year-ender

As 2013 comes to a close, I’ve recently found myself reflecting on the year on both a personal and professional level. How about that for a completely stereotypical opening to a December column? They probably teach that on the first day of Year-End Column Writing 101, which I’m pretty sure is a required course in every college Journalism program.

Then again, maybe not. This is probably going to come as a huge shock to my readers (which I estimate to be at least seven people — not to brag), but I’ve never even taken a Journalism class, so I could be wrong about that.

Anyway, I seriously have been looking back over things that have happened this year, both in my personal life and at work. I’ll spare you the personal revelations — not that I actually had any, but I’ll pretend that I did so I don’t seem shallow. However, the job related stuff is definitely fair game and there are three things that I find myself thinking about the most.

I was again reminded that this has to be one of the greatest professions on earth both because of the job itself and the people who do it.

It’s the confluence of sev-

eral things I, and probably most of you, love: golf, science, problem solving, working and being outside. As cliché as it is, it really is hard to beat seeing the sun rise over the amazing landscape that we have the opportunity to maintain and improve every day and being able to look back at the end of the day and see the tangible results of our efforts.

Even though it feels like I’m locked in an eternally futile superintendent job search, I would much rather be doing this job than literally anything else (OK, with the possible exception of playing for the Cleveland Indians. The allure of 60+ hour weeks for way less money proved too strong to pass up.)

I’ve also given a lot of thought to writing this column this year and what has come from it. It has given

me the chance to correspond with people I likely never would’ve crossed paths with otherwise and I have learned quite a bit both from those interactions and from the research I did for a few columns. There are some really great people in this business who, despite being in the midst of a hectic golf season and, in one case, two weeks out from hosting a major, still took the time to shoot me an e-mail about a column they enjoyed. It honestly blew me away.

Probably the most striking thing I realized this year is the effect this job can sometimes have on your family. The hours and the unpredictability of this business can make the tough job of raising kids even tougher.

Before my wife and I had kids, I never really gave a second thought to how much I

worked and she was probably more than happy to have me and my idea of “funny” out of her hair for extended periods of time. Added bonus: built-in excuse to dodge in-law visits and going to weddings.

But now, with two little ones running around, it’s a completely different ballgame. Many of us have seen bosses or co-workers deal with this issue when we were younger, but until you experience it for yourself, you really can’t understand what it’s all about.

In addition to working full-time, I know how much extra work at home my wife has to take on during the season because of my work schedule. I am unbelievably grateful that she is willing to do so because she understands how much I love my job and the commitment it takes to do it. The spouses of people in this business, especially those with kids, work just as much, if not more, than we do. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say they are the unsung heroes of golf course maintenance.

I guess the overarching theme to all this is that I’m very fortunate to have an awesome family and a great job in the best business on earth. Keeping this in mind certainly helps to put the bad days and the occasional setbacks in perspective.

And I was only kidding about dodging both in-law visits and weddings. It’s just rude to bail on someone’s wedding.

Matt Neff (mneff4@yahoo.com) is assistant superintendent at Wedgewood G&CC in Powell, Ohio.



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Lucky

BY KEN MOUM AND SETH JONES



Like Dad always said, “I’d rather be lucky than good.” ¶ The number 13 may be considered unlucky by some, but as we look back, 2013 was definitely a lucky year for *Golfdom*. In the same year that we launched a major redesign of the magazine, we also met Arnold Palmer (see page 6) and Billy Casper (page 22), enlisted Annika Sorenstam as a speaker for our *Golfdom* Summit (page 25), stayed mostly dry at the U.S. Open (page 23) and maybe above all else... avoided falling into any sinkholes (page 22). ¶ So allow us a few pages to reminisce on the good times and bad times of 2013. As always, we hope you’ll accept our attempts at humor for what they are: attempts.

Time again for our annual year in review. A look at who bet on black and won big in 2013, and who busted.

In January, NOAA scientists said the global average temperature for 2012 was the 10th warmest since record keeping began in 1880. It was also the 36th consecutive year with a global temperature above the 20th century average. The last below-average annual temperature was 1976.

The contiguous United States had its warmest year since national records began in 1895, surpassing the previous record set in 1936 by 1.0°F (0.6°C).

Only the 10th warmest year since 1880? 2012, what a wimpy year.

A GCSAA dues increase was approved by the GCSAA membership at the association’s annual meeting. A dues increase of \$25 for Class A and Superintendent (SM) members and \$15 for Class C members passed by a 7,022 to 844 count, or an 88 percent margin.

We’re affiliate members, so we came out of this

unscathed. Well, except for that one awkward moment when we were asked to leave the GCSAA building...

According to the National Golf Foundation, only 13.5 new golf courses (defined as 18-hole equivalents) opened in 2012 vs. 154.5 course closures. This marked the seventh straight year that more golf courses closed than opened in the U.S. Of those 154.5 golf courses that closed this past year, a disproportionate number of them were public facilities (68 percent of total closures).

	OPENINGS	CLOSURES	NET CHANGE
TOTAL 2012	13.5	154.5	-141.0
Daily Fee	8.5	130.5	-122.0
Municipal	1.5	8.5	-7.0
Private	3.5	15.5	-12.0

Continued on page 22