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## // ON THE ROAD

Continued from page 20

"We've been a struggling association," says T. A. Barker, president of the chapter and the Class A superintendent of Fore Lakes GC in Taylorsville, Utah. "We've taken full advantage of this program, and it's put us back on track."

Barker thinks back to only a few years ago when he made a \$10,000 charge on his personal credit card to cover the expense of the chapter's annual meeting — a move that was not popular with his wife. "I almost got cut that day," he laughs.



T. A. Barker

That day the Intermountain had no money to write a check. Today they have \$50,000 at their disposal.

"David Phipps and Steve Randall flew out here and sat down with us and our



"We want (chapter members) as part of the team, we don't want them as just a statistic, but we value what they bring to the table," says Ron Wright, CGCS. "We're all in this together... we all need to work together to make golf well again." Pictured, David Phipps working with kids as a part of The First Green program.

board of directors and had a strategic planning meeting with us," Barker says. "We're running this chapter more as a business now. And it feels like GCSAA cares more

about their chapters than they did before."

### Stealing from the rich

A smaller chapter like the Intermountain

PHOTO COURTESY: T.A. BARKER (INSET); GCSAA

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has certainly seen the benefit of the field staff, but what about it's larger brethren?

Just to the east, in Colorado, Gary Leeper, executive director of the Rocky Mountain GCSA, says his chapter sees little benefit in the field staff program.

"For the budget, that money could be used other places to benefit all members. I believe that the field staff only benefits smaller chapters. Chapters such as the RMGCSA, their membership dues are paying for other chapters to benefit from field staff," he says. "The only thing I've seen different from the field staff is we get a list of GCSAA members who have not renewed and visibility at some of our RMGCSA hosted events. That's about all I can think of."

Leeper, who owns an association management company and has been the executive director of the RMGCSA for a dozen years, says the Rocky Mountain has been one of the stronger affiliated chapters of GCSAA. Their numbers typically hover around 600 members.

Leeper says he is not sure the regional field staff is the correct direction to strengthen chapters. He believes the way to make chapters stronger is to consolidate the number of chapters, taking some of the smaller ones and bringing them under the umbrella of the larger, better-financed chapters.

### Defining expectations

Ihms agrees that the program is a work-in-progress. He also says that, though it won't happen on his watch, he wouldn't be surprised to see the field staff team grow in upcoming years.

"I can really see us utilizing this position better. Right now, we have one person in a region, it's a challenge for that person to get around to all of the board meetings," Ihms says. "They could be involved in more detail in government relations issue... in getting new members. Just think about those few things, which is really in the scope of what we'd like them to be doing now... but it's physically impossible for one individual to do that."

Leeper, however, says that he and other chapter leaders need a clear picture of the objectives of the field staff program in order to better judge it.

"I'm not really sure what their role is. How can I evaluate them, how can GCSAA evaluate them if we don't even know what they're supposed to be doing?" he says. "Could we use those same dollars to strengthen chapters and create branding and promotional opportunities locally? I think so."

### Moving in the right direction

Even though Seattle traffic is at a standstill, Phipps still feels like things are moving in the right direction. At the Western Washington meeting, a great discussion was held on cool season pythium, which is currently ravaging greens in the area.

"Guys are flat-out losing their greens," says the former superintendent, and winner of GCSAA's 2011 President's Award for

*Continued on page 24*

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“Our personalities come together well. You couldn’t have asked for a better group to come together, it’s a nice cohesive team,” says Dain. “It’s an extension of what we have here at the GCSAA as well.”

*Continued from page 23*

Environmental Stewardship. “The joke around up here is the best sprayer up here is a sod cutter!”

Phipps is finishing a streak of seven weeks with trips.

“The neat thing is meeting people, and the stories they share. You develop friendships. It’s no longer a handshake, it’s a shoulder-slap,” he says. “I then get to share information from chapter to chapter. Helping superintendents do their jobs better — it’s a goal I have.”

The previous week, all nine field staffers were sitting together in the GCSAA auditorium — one of three times a year they all are in the same city. Ralph Dain, the original GCSAA field staffer, based in the golf hotbed that is Florida, doesn’t hesitate to say that these last six years have been the most rewarding of his career. He wanted the job so badly, he says, that following his interview at GCSAA headquarters, he stopped at a nearby church and got down on his knees and prayed.

Cloud ponders the many ways he’s been involved with the GCSAA. Since 1980, he’s been involved with GCSAA as a student, an assistant, a superintendent, a vendor, a chapter executive and now as an employee.

“I’ve seen this association from every aspect, with the exception of serving on the board, that exists,” he says. “I don’t want to sound corny, but it was a dream come true to be a part of an organization that I had been involved with since I was a student. I just felt so proud and honored.”

That doesn’t mean the job is easy.

“We’re still explaining our purpose,” he says. “Chapters weren’t real sure at the beginning, if we were spying on them, or what.


“Now they understand that we’re not threatening in any way... We’re a resource.” 

PHOTO COURTESY: GCSAA



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# The Golfdom Conversation

## Keith Ihms



GCSAA's new president discusses his departure from CC of Little Rock, his plans for the future and how being on the job hunt will impact his year as president.

BY SETH JONES

**B**arely a month after the conclusion of the 2014 Golf Industry Show, at which Keith Ihms accepted the gavel and became the new president of the GCSAA, a surprising announcement was made: Ihms was no longer the head superintendent at the CC of Little Rock, where he had been employed since 2005.

*Golfdom* caught up with Ihms recently to discuss the nature of his leaving CC of Little Rock, his next steps and where he hopes to land from here.

**Golfdom:** Keith, thanks for taking the time to chat with me. Before we get going, and I'm sorry to get touchy-feely, but with a recent tragedy in your life (Ihms' wife, Nita, passed away last year), and now being at a career crossroads, I just want to ask: are you doing OK?

**Keith Ihms:** It's been a difficult road. It's one that people say you can't prepare for, and you can't. You really don't know how long it's going to take to recover from it. I have my moments, but I'm moving forward. I have a large support group, my second family and my first family... so yeah, I'd say I'm doing fine.

**Golfdom:** Good, good. So, you an-

nounced recently that you have left CC of Little Rock... what are your plans moving forward?

**Ihms:** It's really kind of interesting. When I was in Dallas (at Bent Tree CC), I was there about ten years... I think we did a really good job, giving them good conditions, we did a renovation, gave the golf course back to them at a different level. I went through a personal tragedy in my life then with the separation from my wife... I was looking for a change, so I moved to CC of Little Rock.

This is parallel to that in some ways. I've been here about 9 years, we maintained a golf course in top condition, we did a renovation, gave them another golf course at another level. Then, of course, I had a personal tragedy here.

I'm looking forward to moving to a new

opportunity. I don't want to say I want to put things behind me totally, but you know, there are a lot of different memories, a lot of different things that play into when you're somewhere... I think an opportunity to move to a new location and a new challenge, whatever that may be, I think that will be good for me both personally and professionally.

**Golfdom:** Are you pretty wide-open as to where you'd be willing to go, or do you have a specific region you're targeting?

**Ihms:** Well... I'm kind of on my own, so I don't have anything holding me back. I would like to stay close to where I'm at now. Texas is always a possibility, that's where I'm from. I might even be interested in the Florida market; I've got family there. The long and short of the story is, I'll go anywhere that there is an opportunity that is good for me, but I have some areas I'm focusing on.

**Golfdom:** Keith, this one is the tough one, but it's the one I've been getting calls about the most... can you tell me any more about your exiting CC of Little Rock?

**Ihms:** In this business, people understand job changes and what can and should be said about it. What I would say is I still have a very good relationship here

with my membership and the people I work closely with. When you're at a private club, you're hired by a group of people on a board, and in seven, eight, nine years that entire board changes and sometimes there are philosophical differences. I can't really say anything specific except that I left on good terms.

**Golfdom:** Being in a job search right now, how will that impact your year as president of the GCSAA?

**Ihms:** I think it would be foolish for me to say that it doesn't have some effect on how I do my work for the GCSAA, but that being said, having a job in this business, and volunteering at this level, all of those things are going to effect being able to

serve as president of the GCSAA.

My intent is to continue and go along as I have been doing. It's not just about me. There are eight other members on that board, there's a great staff at headquarters... it's not going to change what my goals were, from how it would have happened if I continued to work at the CC of Little Rock... things are still moving forward. I just got back from China... I don't foresee it changing in any way, quite frankly.

**Golfdom:** Along those lines, let's talk about the commitment of serving on the GCSAA board... you mentioned you're just coming back from China, there is so much travel... do you think your service on the

board has been burdensome to your career?

**Ihms:** I wouldn't say it's been burdensome, I would say it's improved me as an individual and as a golf course superintendent in many ways. To give you a couple examples, I'm a much better manager of my time. That comes from necessity. You have obligations from work, obligations from family and obligations from GCSAA, so you really have to manage your time well, and I've gotten better at that.

I think GCSAA has afforded me a lot of opportunities from a business standpoint to be a better golf course superintendent... being involved with the level of budgets, budget planning, meeting planning and

*Continued on page 28*



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all of that has impacted how I serve my members at my facility. I've been told by my greens chairman and my club president that they saw growth in me over the last several years. I'd say there's much more positive than there is negative.

Sure it takes time, honestly, but I would not do anything differently.

**Golfdom:** What does GCSAA's bylaws state about the president not being a working superintendent?

**Ihms:** There is a bylaw restriction that you have six months to become reemployed. You have to be a golf course superintendent. You cannot become president and then decide, 'Hey I'm just going to focus 100 percent on GCSAA and not work.' That is not allowed. I want to have a superintendent position (within the next six months), that is definite.

**Golfdom:** What kind of reaction have

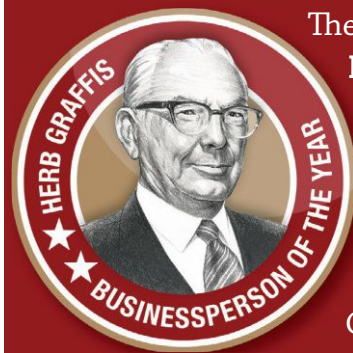


GCSAA President Keith Ihms, CGCS (right) must find a superintendent job in six months, otherwise, according to GCSAA bylaws, he must pass the gavel to Vice President John O'Keefe, CGCS (left).

you received from GCSAA members since you made your announcement that you were no longer employed at your old club?

**Ihms:** I've had many calls and messages, as you can imagine. All have been positive and supportive. The first

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question is always, 'how are you doing?' followed by, 'what are you plans going forward?', both from work and GCSAA perspectives.

There, of course, have been a number of people very surprised, but most have either dealt with this type of thing themselves or known someone who has gone through it. As I have said before, our membership is a great group who honestly have concern for their fellow superintendents.

**Golfdom:** That's great Keith. Thank you again for taking the time. I do look forward to hearing where you go from here. I would think there are many courses out there who would be honored to have a superintendent such as yourself, who has reached your level of professionalism, as their superintendent.

**Ihms:** I hope you're right! And thank you, Seth, for giving me this opportunity to address these questions. 

## IN LATE MARCH, GCSAA PRESIDENT KEITH IHMS MADE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT VIA GCSAA.ORG:

### A message from GCSAA President Keith A. Ihms, CGCS

Although it has been nearly a month since I was elected to lead your national association as president during the GCSAA Annual Meeting and Election in Orlando, I am still humbled and honored by the opportunity I have been given. The trust that you have placed in me to lead this organization through changing times in our industry is something I do not take lightly.

Recently, I have been witness to the changing nature of golf course management at a very personal level, and I felt compelled to notify GCSAA members about these changes. Effective March 1, I left my position as the director of grounds maintenance at the Country Club of Little Rock (Ark.), a position I had held since 2005. Per GCSAA bylaws, I will continue to serve as your national president during this time of transition. I want to assure you that while I am exploring new opportunities in my career as a golf course superintendent, the duties and responsibilities that come with the presidency of GCSAA will never be far from my mind and will continue to receive my full attention and focus during this period.

During both my career and my time of service on the GCSAA Board of Directors, I have always adhered to an open-door policy, and that certainly will not change during this time of transition in my life. I appreciate your thoughts, and thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,  
Keith A. Ihms, CGCS  
GCSAA President



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# CAN GARY LEZAK SEE THE FUTURE?

KANSAS CITY WEATHERMAN SAYS HIS APP IS SO ACCURATE THAT HE KNOWS THE WEATHER FOR MASTERS WEEK... A FULL SIX WEEKS OUT.

BY MOLLY GASE

**I**t doesn't matter that the Masters is, on this day, still more than six weeks away. Gary Lezak says he can predict the future. And he says with confidence: those heading to Augusta National the second week of April will need to pack an umbrella.

Only time will tell if Lezak, chief meteorologist at KSHB in Kanas City, Mo., is correct. Lezak may not have a crystal ball at his disposal, but instead uses a theory called Lezak's Recurring Cycle (LRC).

"My company (Weather 2020) is based on the knowledge of the cycling weather pattern. I can make these weather forecasts from day one all the way to 50, 100, even 250 days into the future as soon as I know the weather pattern," says Lezak.

Utilizing these cycles of weather patterns, Lezak successfully predicted the unusual weather for the 2014 Super Bowl in New Jersey. "The Super Bowl forecast

was one we made 50 days before the Super Bowl, but we gained confidence (in January when we made our prediction four weeks out) that it would warm up into the 50s with no chance of snow. We even said it might snow a day or two later and it did. It may have been the best forecast I made in my entire career because it ended up being in the 50s that day," says Lezak.

According to Lezak, a unique weather pattern is established each fall in October or November. This pattern cycles throughout the year, allowing the meteorologist to make predictions well into the future.

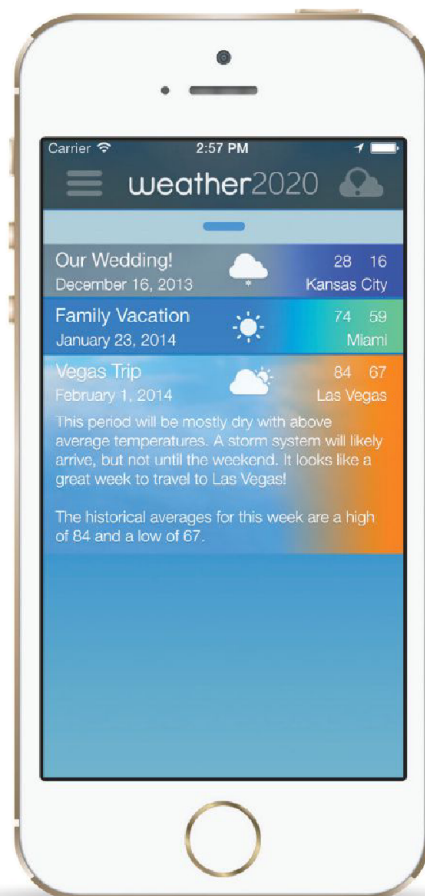
Though the details can be difficult to pin down, Lezak says his predictions through Weather 2020 are more accurate than a more traditional seven-day forecast. "A 50-day forecast will be as accurate as a three- or four-day forecast is today using the LRC."

### Masters forecast

The key to understanding the LRC is linked to deciphering each weather pat-



Gary Lezak



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