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“To me, all of these signs are an indication that the successful golf courses and operators will continue to improve and grow.”

**MARK WOODWARD**, *Contributing Editor*

## Positive signs for golf

**A**fter several years of tough times in golf, I choose to believe that 2014 is going to be a good year for our industry. Now, I don't have any magic formula of predicting the future, but I'm already seeing small signs that make me feel optimistic about this year. As we all know, beginning in late 2008 and continuing through 2013, our industry has struggled right along with the economic times.

We've all seen the statistics about rounds being down, revenues being down, people being laid off, more golf courses closing each year than opening and budgets being cut. I have personally felt the impact of these tough economic times and downturns in everything related to golf.

When I was with the GCSAA, we laid off close to 30 employees and the organization felt the direct impact of the entire industry tightening its collective belt. Our vendors/partners gave the association less marketing dollars, so we had to take special, but necessary measures to balance the budget.

When I returned to Arizona and worked for a golf course construction/renovation company, it was extremely difficult to get work because golf facilities were

hunkering down, not spending any money on their much needed renovation work.

When I started my own golf course renovation company, we saw a niche in the business, focusing on small to medium sized renovation projects. Even though we did well as a small start-up company, the work is seasonal, making it hard to keep staff busy year-round.

With all of these examples of how our industry has struggled, I still choose to believe that things are looking up for 2014.

One positive sign is at the golf course where I do consulting work. It is doing quite well considering what has happened there over the past several years. Rounds have gone from 29,000 to 49,000 in just 18 months. Revenue has also increased substantially,

commensurate with the increase in play. Additionally, rounds are up for the first part of January 2014 compared to the same period in 2013.

Our renovation company is already seeing an increase in golf courses wanting renovation work. We're right in the middle of our golf season here in the desert southwest, when no renovation work typically occurs, and we already have more work on the books and scheduled in 2014 than we've had the past two seasons. We believe that the golf courses that are going to make it through these tough times are now beginning to approve budgets and projects to take care of their number one asset, the golf course itself.

In my mind, another indication of a slow turn around, is that golf course owners in all sectors of the industry

(private, daily fee, resort and municipal) are looking for new ways to keep their golf courses open. They obviously recognize the importance of golf to their members, guests and communities and are taking measures to insure that their facilities remain viable business entities.

They are looking at alternative ways to manage their golf courses and engaging more actively in player development programs. They are changing their methods of managing the tee sheets, focusing on yield management, they are making efforts to grow the game and attract new golfers to their facilities and, as I mentioned earlier, taking better care of the physical plant itself, the golf course.

To me, all of these signs are an indication that the successful golf courses and operators will continue to improve and grow, giving our industry one of its better years in quite some time.

I understand that there are many variables that could affect how successful our 2014 will be, including weather and the economy. There won't be a huge spike in rounds, revenues and course openings, but I still choose to believe that if we all do our respective parts, we can collectively make a difference and this will be a great year in golf.

**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*. He can be reached at [mwoodward@obsports.com](mailto:mwoodward@obsports.com).





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“We are very fortunate to have this opportunity to enrich our own lives and share our bounty with our families and our friends.”

**JOEL JACKSON**, *Senior Contributing Editor*

## The wild, wacky, wonderful world of golf maintenance

**A**s the new year unfolds and my travels line up on the calendar, I’m reminded what a great career I’ve had as a superintendent and still being associated with the profession.

The exposure to human nature and Mother Nature is a constant learning experience that keeps one physically and intellectually engaged. If you’re getting bored, then maybe it is time you make a career change to find something that will get your juices flowing again. For those who enjoy what you are doing, here is a look at the wild, wacky and wonderful world we inhabit in the golf industry.

### **Wild**

More natural areas are being incorporated into new golf course designs as the “target golf” concept lessens maintained turf acreage, which reduces water use, labor, fertilizer and chemical inputs, which in turn, lowers budget expenses.

On older courses the trend to convert formerly main-

tained turfgrass, but otherwise “out-of-play” sections of the course, into natural areas grows annually. These changes are mainly in response to economic pressures and fallout from a flat national golf participation rate. However they are also positive environmentally.

For those of us on the course at sunrise, the encounters with wildlife are priceless. Why not have some eco-tours on your course this year to educate your members or public about the great wildlife habitats on our courses?

### **Wacky**

The constant refrain we hear, “Golf is a Big Water User” is so off-key it hurts my ears. Anyone can Google “Water Use Reports,” key in a state and do a little searching on use by water consumer groups

(agriculture, public supply, business/industry, power generation, recreation and private wells). You’ll find out pretty darn quickly that “recreational use,” which usually includes a golf portion along with sports fields, parks and recreation, etc., is usually one of smallest slices of the water-use pie chart.

You have to do a little math, but in Florida, golf water use has been running about 3-3.5 percent of the total since 1995. Nationally, the GCSAA figure is one-half of one percent. Considering that Florida has more courses than any other state, perhaps that’s not so surprising. Outdoor water use (lawn irrigation), in the public supply sector, runs about 15 percent. I’ll just “set and forget” that factoid.

Also wacky is the push by activists to ban fertilizer use

during the summer “rainy” season for fear of runoff and leaching nutrient pollution of Florida’s waterways. Banning plant nutrition during the summer “growing” season is really wacky. Don’t feed the turf when it can take it up most efficiently. Feed it in the spring or fall when roots are just coming back or are just shutting down. Duh!

### **Wonderful**

Last is the wonderful category. All of the above occur in all walks of life. To me, golf combines business, sport, camaraderie, health, nature, hard work, leadership, skill, imagination, communication and perseverance.

Our profession offers so much diversity. We are exposed to so many people, places and possibilities. We are very fortunate to have this opportunity to enrich our own lives and share our bounty with our families and our friends. One sure-fire way to enhance your life is to join, support and volunteer with your local superintendent’s chapter.

I hope I get to meet and see many of you at the Golf Industry Show or in my travels. It seems to me that many of us have wild, wacky and wonderful stories about this profession.

**Joel Jackson, CGCS-Ret.**, is senior contributing editor for *Golfdom*. Email him at [flrjgn@aol.com](mailto:flrjgn@aol.com).





# Chicken poop.

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"I am by no means an experienced golf collection reviewer, if such a thing exists, but I can tell you one thing for sure: This place is nothing short of amazing."

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

## Part office, part museum, all incredible

**R**embrandt. If you were ever forced to endure an art history class in college, the professor probably mentioned the 17th century Dutch master on the first day of class before he even got his beret and scarf off.

What does he have to do with golf? Not a whole lot really, but he did produce an etching entitled *The Golf Player*. What does that have to do with this column? I actually got to see it, among many other amazing pieces at the offices of Hurdzan Golf in Columbus, Ohio.

Dr. Mike Hurdzan is not only a well known architect with several courses appearing in all of "The Lists" and the 2013 Old Tom Morris Award winner, he's an avid collector of golf memorabilia.

Actually, "memorabilia" doesn't even seem like the right word. Memorabilia, to me, conjures images of old pennants, bobblehead dolls and autographed pictures. Believe me, this collection far surpasses that.

Let it be known that there is no way for me to adequately

describe this collection in the space I am allotted. After several vain attempts to do so, I've come to terms with the fact that a general overview, with highlights mixed in, will have to suffice. Maybe it's better that way, so if you ever have a chance to see it for yourself, you too can be blown away by the magnitude of it all.

The 5,000-square-foot building occupied by Hurdzan Golf is most accurately described as a functional museum. The offices and common areas of the building all serve their traditional purposes, while also serving as mini galleries for the artifacts, artwork, literature and ephemera that Dr. Hurdzan has amassed over nearly 50 years of collecting.

In addition, the building houses a functioning hickory

golf club repair shop (which is probably a necessity when you own thousands of them) and an unbelievable library, packed with hundreds of volumes on golf history. As you might expect from a former superintendent and practicing architect, many deal with golf course maintenance and architecture.

The collection includes original writings, drawings, field sketches and notes by some of the most famed architects of the Golden Age, including MacKenzie, Ross, Tillinghast, MacDonald, Colt and Raynor. While there were literally dozens of highlights in the library alone, two of the most impressive involve the great Alister Mackenzie.

One is a map of the Old Course inscribed "To my friend A.W. Tillinghast, from A. MacKenzie." The other is a

hand written document that contains sketches and notes of all 18 greens at Augusta, penned by MacKenzie. Dr. Hurdzan found this piece tucked into the back of a book acquired for the collection, unknown to both him and seller. I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the almost complete set of *Golfdom* Magazine issues, dating back to the first volume published in 1927. That's right, this is no fly-by-night publication you're reading.

Even the exterior is cool. There is a rather impressive artificial grass green and chipping area, complete with a bunker. Every parking space in the lot has a sign reserving it for a pro golfer, famous architect or other golf course industry professional (i.e. head pro, caddymaster, etc.). Glaring omission: no reserved parking for Assistant Superintendents. So I took Tiger's spot.

I am by no means an experienced golf collection reviewer, if such a thing exists, but I can tell you one thing for sure: This place is nothing short of amazing. Dr. Hurdzan is unbelievably accommodating and more than willing to give anyone the full tour — after all, I got in. As he told me when I set up my tour, his only requirement is that you love golf.

So if you're reading this magazine, you surely qualify.

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



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# JIMMY THE KID

**I**t was a courtesy interview that made everything else possible: a career would be born; a private club would be revitalized; and a Donald Ross gem would be restored.

Jim Rattigan (Jimmy to many) was the 14-year-old kid with the A-game who used to work picking balls on the range. When he was 16 he took a job on the crew cutting cups. Even when he left for college — Coastal Carolina first, to try out the PGA Golf Management program, then Penn State to earn a turf degree — he still returned home to work summers on the crew.

So when the superintendent job opened up during his senior year at Penn State, he decided to “throw his hat in the ring and see what happened.” He had little expectation to get an interview.

A week after his interview, the phone rang.

“It went from a courtesy interview to they were going to give me a shot, and I hadn’t even gotten out of school yet,” Rattigan recalls. “It was a whirlwind of excitement... a little bit of fear, but ultimately it was something I was so excited to take on and to do, I couldn’t wait to get here and get started.”

*Continued on page 20*

*Range picker at 14...*

*Superintendent at 24...*

*Director of operations by 28...*

**How Schuylkill CC’s decision to hire the local kid paid off.**

**BY SETH JONES**

**PHOTO BY CHANDON DE LA TORRE**



**"IT WENT FROM A COURTESY INTERVIEW  
TO THEY WERE GOING TO GIVE ME A SHOT,  
AND I HADN'T EVEN GOTTEN OUT OF SCHOOL YET."**



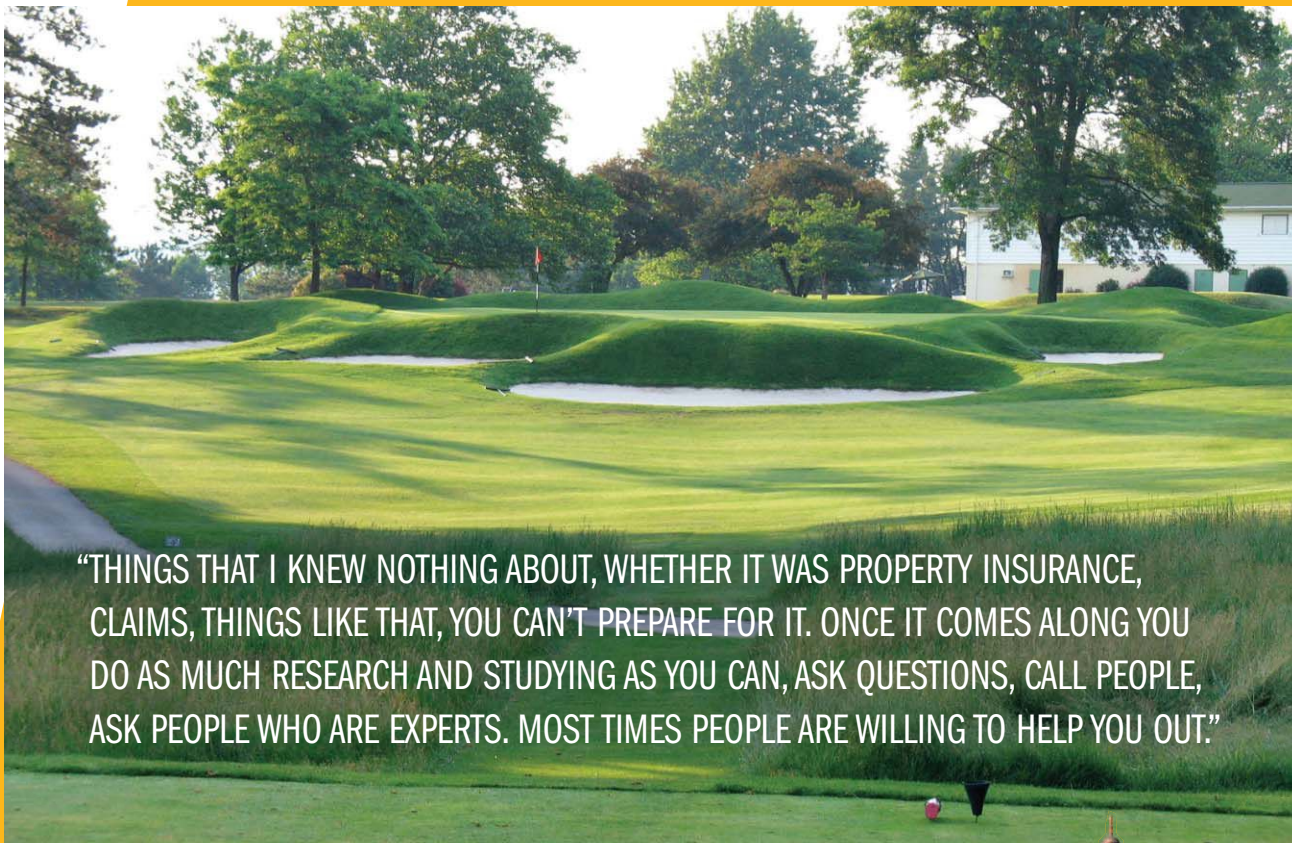
**JIM RATTIGAN**

Director of Operations  
Schuylkill Country Club,  
Orwigsburg, Pa.

The HERB GRAFFIS BUSINESSPERSON OF THE YEAR award is named in honor of *Golfdom*'s founder, World Golf Hall of Fame member Herb Graffis. Graffis was one of the first people to look at golf as a business when he and his brother Joe founded *Golfdom* in 1927. With his foresight, Graffis helped advance the game in numerous ways, from co-founding the National Golf Foundation and founding the Golf Writers Association of America to his work advocating on behalf of superintendents and helping elevate their profile.

The award includes a *Golfdom* cover story celebrating the person's accomplishments, as well as expenses-paid trips to both the *Golfdom* Summit and the Golf Industry Show. It is in all due respect that we present this award in Mr. Graffis' honor.





“THINGS THAT I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT, WHETHER IT WAS PROPERTY INSURANCE, CLAIMS, THINGS LIKE THAT, YOU CAN'T PREPARE FOR IT. ONCE IT COMES ALONG YOU DO AS MUCH RESEARCH AND STUDYING AS YOU CAN, ASK QUESTIONS, CALL PEOPLE, ASK PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPERTS. MOST TIMES PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO HELP YOU OUT.”

*Continued from page 19*

★ ★ ★

### **Going all-out**

From that fateful day in 2002 to today, Rattigan has seen many successes. Now add to that list the 2014 Herb Graffis Businessperson of the Year Award, named in honor of *Golfdom's* founder, Herb Graffis, who started the magazine in 1927 (see sidebar, page 19.)

A lot of things happened fast for Rattigan. He was only 24 when he was offered the job at Schuylkill (pronounced *SKOOK-uhl*), a Donald Ross/Willie Park Jr. designed private club in sleepy central Pennsylvania. It was then a quick six years later that he was promoted to general manager, taking on the title of director of operations/superintendent.

Before he applied for the superintendent position, Rattigan discussed the possibility at length with the late George Hamilton, his professor at Penn State who convinced him to leave Coastal Carolina

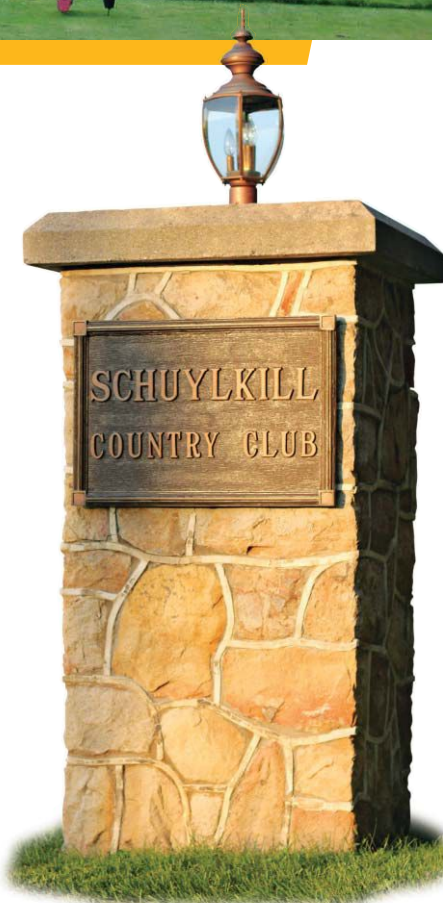
to pursue a turf degree over a career as a PGA Professional. They agreed it couldn't hurt to apply, but if he did get a courtesy interview, he should go all-out in order to respect the opportunity.

Rattigan entered the interview room with a projector and laptop, both borrowed from Hamilton, and a nothing-to-lose attitude.

“A couple things stood out about Jimmy: first and foremost, his excellent academic record,” recalls Joe Troy, a Pennsylvania attorney and a longtime member of Schuylkill CC. Troy was one of the members in the room that day.

“His knowledge and commitment to Schuylkill didn't hurt, either,” Troy continues. “Then there was the fact that he was close to a scratch golfer, so he knew how the course should play viewed from a golfer's perspective. Lastly, he had done an internship with (architect and Donald Ross expert) Ron Prichard at Aronimink,

*Continued on page 22*



PHOTOS BY: WILL SCHNEIDER