



SHAMELESSLY UNPROFESSIONAL

By Monroe S. Miller

CLUB MANAGEMENT

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF CLUBBOOM

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Dear GCSAA Conference & Show Exhibitor,

Are you getting all of the business you can out of private golf and country clubs?

Sure, you work hard to market your products to the greens superintendents and grounds keepers, and they are very important buying influences. But what about the people who sign the checks? They must be sold before the order gets placed.

Who are these people? In the private golf and country clubs, they are the club managers. It's the managers who shepherd all major purchases through their boards of directors, and they carry the checkbooks for their clubs.

The enclosed brochure announces a way for you to make a positive impact on these important buying influences NOW! The annual issue of the club managers' magazine, CLUB MANAGEMENT, that reports on the managers' annual convention is published in April. It is the most important magazine of the year for managers of private golf and country clubs, and it is your best single opportunity to get your sales message to these important buyers.

The advertising deadline for the April Convention Issue of CLUB MANAGEMENT is March 18. Use it to complete the sale of your products and services for their golf courses.

Cordially,
David A. Baetz, Sales Manager

As I read the above letter, smoke came out my ears, my face turned beet red and my heart rate quickened to over 100 beats a minute. I cannot recall a more blatant, ignorant or selfish round ever fired from one profession in the golf world to another. If this represents the standard of ethical conduct of the Club Managers Association of America, then "profession" is a word I have misused.

I suppose we ought not to be surprised — greed seems to be in the saddle of the land these days. Television evangelists, Wall Street inside traders, professional athletes, et. al. seem to say, "What's in it for me?" Although disgusting, maybe the naked selfish greed this letter from the CMAA displays is becoming a norm.

If the fact that this correspondence was written in the first place doesn't surprise me, then its contents surely do. It is filled with half-truths and lies. It presumably (because I have only one copy) was written to exhibitors at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Houston. Does this sales manager for the CMAA magazine believe he'll be able to parley his letter into oceans of money? Does he think our exhibitors are so stupid that they'll believe the contents of his letter? And does he really believe that the club managers "shepherd all major purchases through

boards of directors"? That is adle minded dreaming: it's a simple untruth told in an effort to enhance an underhanded attempt to sell advertising on something other than the magazine's merits.

Someone ought to tell Mr. Baetz that Golf Course Superintendents are not greens superintendents or grounds keepers. We don't refer to CMAA members as "bar keeps" or "chief spoons", and we don't expect to have his ignorant terminology directed toward us.

Lots of questions crop up in a piece like this. Is Baetz acting on his own or did he write this letter with approval of the CMAA Board? Did he think that no Golf Course Superintendent would see this? And if some of us did cast our eyes on it, did he believe we either wouldn't care or would give quiet and tacit approval? Regardless of Baetz's belief in the line about moving all purchases through a club, does the CMAA Board relegate us, in their minds, to some menial and subordinated role?

Most of us know the answers to these questions. Frankly, I take this letter for what it is: a shamelessly unprofessional correspondence written by an uninformed ad salesman who was inspired by greed while forsaking even a shred of ethics. It demonstrates quite clearly a numskullery attitude of

"anything goes". The question that must be answered is "did the CMAA leadership know this letter was being sent?"

I really believed, maybe naively, that there was a renewed and heightened sense of cooperation among the GCSAA, PGA and CMAA. Once we got squared away with the PGA and their video of a pro holding a soil sampling tube ("what's this for — coring apples?") problem, this sense of oneness in the golfing community was truly pleasant. I thought there was realization of common goals in golf, a recognition of one another's needs and a concomitant mutual respect. Writing a letter to exhibitors at a GCSAA Show, even if it had been a factual letter (it obviously wasn't), was dumb and puerile. Why an organization like the CMAA, with so many things in common with the GCSAA, would choose to denigrate us is beyond my comprehension. It raises questions about their sincerity and credibility. Further, it does nothing positive for their image, even if it does generate some substantial ad revenue. It was a petty and counter-productive letter.

So, what to do? It is incumbent on the officers and directors of the GCSAA to demand an explanation from their counterparts in the CMAA. Was this man acting without supervision? Will he be disciplined? Will public apologies to the membership of the GCSAA be forthcoming? Someone needs to remind the CMAA of the importance of the golden rule, even if they cringe at the thought of following that creed.

Am I making a mountain out of a menu? I don't believe it. This letter may indicate real backroom attitudes that aren't paraded at the head table during our annual GCSAA banquet; it deserves more than a feather bombing by our GCSAA leadership.

The air needs to be cleared of this rank odor of arrogance.