



The GCSAA Still Has A Recognition Problem

By Rob Schultz

It must be summer. The mosquitoes and ticks are back, lawns are turning brown and it's impossible to find a golf course superintendent anywhere but on the course or in bed sleeping.

So, as an aid for all those poor superintendents who forgot the last time they had a day off or didn't have dirt under their fingernails, we're going to discuss some issues that they may have overlooked during the past few busy weeks.

1) When is the GCSAA going to realize it continues to have a serious recognition problem?

C'mon guys. You put out a great poster, but that's about it. The average hacker still doesn't know what the GCSAA is. Does it stand for the Great Communist Society of Average Americans or what?

What's worse, some folks who operate golf courses don't know what the GCSAA is. I played golf with the head of an extremely successful course operation who was looking for a new superintendent. Needing advice, he admitted that he started calling some golf pros.

A few minutes later, after I finished choking, I told him about the GCSAA. Instead of talking to some pros, I politely told him to call some local superintendents. A few days later he called to thank me.

The moral of the story is that my golfing buddy shouldn't have had to learn of the GCSAA from some wag playing in a \$2 Nassau.

The GCSAA should spend some money to get the word out. Golf is a booming sport but the GCSAA still acts as if it's the 19th century. Nobody knows more about golf and golf courses than a superintendent. But few know that except for the superintendents. I don't even think the GCSAA knows it.

Here are a couple of suggestions:

- How about starting a "We're the answer men" advertising campaign? Use a takeoff on Chevrolet's successful Mr. Goodwrench campaign. Then, when somebody has a question about a golf course, they'll know who to call.

God forbid that some are still calling sportswriters and golf pros.

- Improve the GCSAA magazine. I can't believe that it's very readable for all the superintendents, let alone anyone else.

Let's brighten it up with some lively features on issues that don't just relate to turfgrass, pesticides and paint for tee blocks. That would make it readable outside the GCSAA industry and, thus, greatly enhance its image.

There's no reason why Golf Course Management (especially with a new name) can't be a force to reckon with like the PGA's or USGA's magazine. If the GCSAA wants to keep Golf Course Management as is, then create a new magazine — publish it three or four times a year — that uses some of the aforementioned suggestions.

2) The UW golf course is beginning to take shape.

There are few pleasures greater than walking a new golf course under construction late in the evening and after the construction crews have left.

Walking the back 9 of the new UW course one evening in early June, I was amazed at how well everything is falling into place there. The fairways and tees are shaped and the irrigation system is being put in.

The UW's back 9 is simply magnificent. I've been critical of the course and I feel much of it is still a mess. But it's hard to find fault with the backside holes. Undulating and with spectacular views of the countryside from certain areas, this land was created to be a golf course.

Cut through thick woods, you get a feeling of extreme solitude out there. I counted no less than 15 different types of birds. A fox ran out in front of me while chasing one of those birds. And throughout my walk I couldn't help feeling that I was being watched. Finally, I found out why. Peering out from some brush was a doe and her fawn.

3) Winter kill kudos.

It has been a brutal spring as superintendents have worked hard to get their courses ready despite bad cases of winter kill.

Cherokee Country Club in Madison was no exception. And to make matters worse, Cherokee hosted the Big Ten Conference Golf Tournament in early May. The timing couldn't have been worse.

Yet, Mike Semler and his crew did a terrific job getting Cherokee ready. The fairways were excellent. The greens couldn't have been better. They even *looked* good. During discussions with many players and coaches, none could find fault with Cherokee's conditioning. In fact, most went out of their way to ask who the superintendent is at Cherokee so they could thank him.

So kudos to Mike Semler and his crew for a job well done.

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