



# PDI - Something To Think About

By David Pulley, Golf Course Superintendent, Pine Valley Country Club

*Editor's Note: The PDI proposal and attending issues put forth by a GCSAA committee needs lots of understanding and discussion before any decisions are made. To really understand those issues and ramifications, opinions other than those in Lawrence, Kansas are essential, even critical. One of the best and most carefully considered pieces I have read appeared in Volume 36, Number 2 of CAROLINAS GREEN, official publication of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association. It*

*ranks with Al Jansen's article in the last issue of THE GRASS ROOTS. Its author, David Pulley, happily granted permission to reprint his words. So did the editor of CAROLINAS GREEN, Chuck Borman. David is the superintendent at the Pine Valley Country Club in Wilmington, North Carolina.*

Under the guise of what has been named the Professional Development Initiative, the BOD of GCSAA is proposing to regulate who can be considered a Class A member of their association.

Background, experience, professionalism, integrity, work ethics and passion for the profession are not viable components for being considered a Class A superintendent. GCSAA will only consider a superintendent with a 4-year degree (in any field) or a two-year turf degree as a candidate for their new "branded" Class A status. Once Class A status is achieved, you will be allowed to remain Class A only if the new requirements are fulfilled every three years. If not fulfilled, for what ever reasons, you will no longer be considered

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Class A material and will be demoted back to Class B status. GCSAA will no longer promote all superintendent members; they will only promote their "branded" Class A superintendent and CGCS programs.

GCSAA is proposing that all current Class A members be grandfathered into the new "branded" Class A. They will only have to fulfill the new requirements to maintain their status. So, why worry about the requirements for entering Class A? Think it will not affect you? If you are unable financially to fulfill the requirement for CEUs and PDUs, you will be demoted to Class B, considered second rate and not worth marketing. GCSAA intends to inform employers that "branded" Class A and CGCS are the only superintendents that should be hired. Another concern is the requirement that you must be employed as a superintendent at the time of renewal. If you are not (for whatever reason), you may be demoted to Class B status. (This area is still not definite). You should also be aware that if, for any reason, a superintendent without the proper degree (no certificates allowed) loses the Class A status, he/she will not be allowed to return to Class A unless the proper degree is obtained by going back to school.

The most obvious objection to the degree requirement is the exclusion of many excellent superintendents who will never be considered equal, or even qualified for Class A status. The superintendent without a degree (or the proper degree), no matter how successful, or how many years of experience, will never be considered for Class A status. We know the value of experience in this profession and the importance of learning from each other. Why should it matter to GCSAA where or how superintendents acquire their knowledge? Be it from a formal

education or from "the school of hard knocks": knowledge is knowledge. I was fortunate to learn under three excellent superintendents: Paul Waycaster, Steve Sheets and Ray Avery. Thanks to these men, I was provided with the opportunity to succeed in this profession. There are others (without

degrees) that deserve the chance to succeed. This association has never excluded a superintendent from excelling and it should not start now.

Another requirement to qualify for Class A is mandatory self assessment. Superintendents will be required to assess their compe-



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tencies and at least "meet" the established minimal requirement level. The base level of competency is unknown at this time. Your self assessment must then be validated by someone (boss, peer, club official, still undecided) before you can be considered Class A material.

The scariest part of the initiative is the mandatory self assessment required every three years in order to maintain your Class A status. Franklin Covey, a firm based in Salt Lake City that specializes in self improvement philosophies and self motivation tools, has sold the use of their HR WEB tool to GCSAA. Covey has developed an assessment chart with five levels of competencies that relate to the many different skills that a superintendent must possess. Every Class A member will be required to assess their competencies in each category. Classes will be available to help improve your competency levels. GCSAA wants to inform employers about the HR WEB tool so that your employer can assist you in determining your competency levels and recommend courses the employer thinks are necessary for your improvement.

GCSAA want employers to use this information as a guide for deciding what level of competencies an applicant should possess. Just think, one day you will carry your competency profile into an interview and may or may not be considered for the position, depending upon your levels in each category. Of course, once you are a Class A member, there is no validation of the self assessments (Who is qualified to do that anyway?) So, you can have your competency levels read whatever you need.

How about the possibility that GCSAA might decide to "help out" employers? Rather than employers having to wade through 200 resumes, they might fill out a com-

petency profile questionnaire, have GCSAA input the data into the WEB and then, just like that, provide the employer with five or six names. You will never hear about the job opening and, if you are not one of the people on the "list", your name will never come up. Whether mandatory or volun-

tary, there will be problems that arise from the use, misuse, and/or access to the data in the HR WEB.

The next requirement for maintaining your "branded" Class A status is to acquire a certain number of CEU and PDU credits during a three year period. The amount of credits has yet to be determined.

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The GCSAA education department is supposed to make education more affordable and accessible. GCSAA has no idea of the cost, or exactly how they will make it accessible. Nor have they given us a time frame for the implementation of their plans. This requirement should not be voted on before GCSAA has proven to the members that they can, in fact, produce

affordable education. We run the risk of losing good members just because they lack the financial backing that others enjoy. Many superintendents cannot afford to go to the National Conference. Most superintendents are attending as many seminars and meetings as they can afford or have time for. I do not think that this requirement should even be discussed until GCSAA has their programs in place and the costs are known. Only then can we make a fair, knowledgeable decision about the amount of credits to require or not require.

GCSAA's purpose was to support ALL members, and now they want to regulate and qualify who they represent. The membership has no right to act as judge and jury of their peer's qualification. Our Association should be encouraging superintendents to join and participate. Only 45% of the courses in the U.S. have a Class A member and if this initiative passes, GCSAA stands to represent even fewer courses. Superintendents may drop their membership because of the education requirements, a lack of financing or time, a lack of interest or simply because they disagree in principle with the new requirements. Both the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association and GCSAA (dual membership) will suffer financially, but worst of all, both associations will lose quality members.

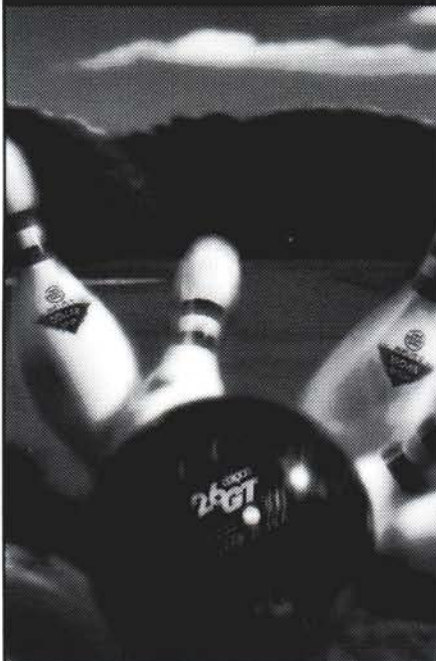
The Carolinas and GCSAA memberships have come to a crossroads. Either you do as they say and be what they want or you choose a different road. Luckily, we in the Carolinas and surrounding states have our local associations and the Turfgrass Council of NC. We also have the state supported certification program for those who are interested in becoming a NC Certified Turfgrass Professional. I believe employers will respect this achievement more than the "branded" Class A status. The Internet now provides

unlimited access to educational materials and data. There are other options such as joining TURFNET and the new GOLFSAT program for fast access to information and products, etc. But I for one would miss the camaraderie that I have enjoyed from being associated with the Carolinas over the years. The most beneficial educational opportunity we have is the willingness of superintendents to help each other and share their knowledge and expertise. Will the passing of PDI affect this special relationship among superintendents? I think it will and in some cases, it already has.

The majority of the members have been apathetic as to how their vote has been cast. I know I have been. We gave our votes to the Carolinas BOD to cast as they saw fit. But then, we have not been informed or asked how they should vote either. The communication between members and the BOD has been poor in this regard. It is very likely that the dual membership would not have passed if the membership had not been apathetic and if the BOD had really been interested in member opinions. We are all accountable for the lack of communication and interest in the policies of CGCSA and GCSAA. This must change now!

PDI has already cost over one million dollars (and it is still in the developmental stage) and will affect every current and potential member for years to come. It is the member's responsibility to become informed, express opinions, and vote on this issue. We, the members, must make certain that the Carolina's BOD casts our votes exactly the way we want. If not, we will have to reclaim our vote and vote individually, or proxy it to someone who will. The PDI issue is much too important to allow only a few BOD members to decide how 500 members will vote. Please, get involved, whether you are pro or con. Take responsibility for the direction of your associations. ♻

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