

Winter Activities

By Brett Grams, Chapter Manager, Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

What a winter, or a lack thereof! Here in central Wisconsin we had a truly low snow winter. Unlike the past 3 or so winters where if there was a concentration of snow it seemed to fall on the center part of the state this year was an exact opposite. The few storms that did track into our great state seemed to veer north or south of us. I believe we had only three snow events that totaled more than 2 inches and one of those was in early November. Hopefully the winter weather at your location was helpful to getting your outdoor projects accomplished and that Mother Nature provides for a healthy and consistent start to the 2012 season.

Since the middle part of January I have been very busy with the very important administrative type tasks that are a part of serving our membership. Dues renewal, industry partnerships, budgeting, updating and maintaining the WGCSA website, building the PAR4 Research Website, and attending the GIS where we host the annual WI Room all make for a busy schedule in the winter months. This is my peak season and I am happy to report that somehow, someway it will all get done. The success the WGCSA has with renewing memberships, and securing advertisers and sponsors at this time of year will dictate the financial success and amount of funding toward our efforts the rest of the year. The economic challenges we all face are also a reality for the WGCSA but

thanks to many businesses and members who continue to support our association we will overcome these challenges in 2012 like we have in the past.

One of the nice things about this time of year is getting to see many of you at your slower times. Conversations with many of you whether they are on the phone, in person at meetings, or even email are a little longer and a little more personal at this time of the year. No matter how busy I am I strive to make the time to work with all your concerns and needs one on one. I realize how busy most of you soon will be as you prepare and open your great facilities so making time for you in your off season will always continue to be a priority.

I hope that many of you that attended the GIS had a worthwhile trip. My trip was short but productive. I was again able to attend a daylong session of meetings with fellow chapter executives and also sat in on the editor session with our David Brandenburg. Other than a terrible head cold I had that particular day it was a great experience. In my conversations with the staffers that I have gotten to know at the GCSAA all seem to report an increase in participation. The tradeshow appeared busy and many vendors and attendees reported they found it productive. The show was once far bigger but those that want to showcase products and meet one on one with decision makers is still the same. Perhaps the current quality is better than

the higher quantity of the past GIS show floors. Las Vegas seemed to be a polarizing location as well. People seem to love the excitement and night life or find it a distraction. I heard plenty of both comments during the three days I was in town.

During my trip I was able to talk to other leaders in our industry and a general theme seems to be emerging. Given the stagnation or lack of growth of participation in our great game some are beginning to question if the role of the superintendent associations might need to shift.

The GCSAA and WGCSA have similar missions with growing the professionalism and providing educational opportunities that increase the value of the superintendent. Overall I think most will agree that this has been successful as the vast majority of the superintendents today are very educated and very good at what they do.

Even with large budget restraints today's courses are in fantastic condition compared to even a few years ago. Turf maintenance has never been higher but golf is flat. Some think we as an industry should now be considering a change in our efforts. Rather than growing the profession we should be thinking about the big picture and focusing more (most likely with others) on growing the game.

After all as one person I talked to said does it really matter if we have all these great golf course superintendents who have the ability to maintain and manage great facilities but we do not have enough golfers to sustain the facilities? Some may view this idea as new. Others of you have been discussing this for a few years. Other chapters are joining forces with the PGA Sections, GC Owners, in promoting statewide golf days, and turning resources and efforts at grass root campaigns to help grow new golfers and increase participation. What do you think? I would enjoy hearing your thoughts on this subject. Please send me an email or give me a call. No matter how busy we all are we must make time to plan for the future!



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