

Careers: What to Expect When You're Expecting

By **Brian Bonlender**, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, West Bend Country Club

It was yet another cold and snowy day for the 6th annual WGCSA Assistant Superintendent Seminar: nothing less would be expected this winter. With almost 50 Assistant Superintendents, vendors, and Superintendents registered for the February 17th event at Whispering Springs Golf Club in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, this year's attendees walked away with a better idea of what to expect in advancing their careers thanks to the renown speakers from across the country who gave their insight on the industry.

The morning started with an exceptional talk by Bruce R. Williams, CGCS, from Bruce Williams Golf Consulting, on developing skills that will set aspiring Superintendents apart from other applicants. According to Williams, setting yourself apart today is more important and harder than ever. With closures of courses, current employees of the industry looking to advance their careers, and graduates from the many turf programs around the country, the employment picture becomes very cluttered and crowded. With job competition high, setting oneself apart is crucial. Suggested steps would be working for a well-known superintendent, at a respected facility, or having the opportunity to see and learn the ins and outs of a Superintendents managerial responsibilities:

project management, purchasing, budgeting, and setting up pesticide or irrigation programs. In addition, Williams emphasized leadership qualities, specifically knowing the value of individuals and empowering those around you, leadership is an essential skill in furthering any career.

The day continued with Joseph C. Coan CCM, CCE, Chief Operation Officer of Westmoor Country Club. Coan focused his presentation on the topic of clear and concise communication as an interviewee. First, Coan established the importance of initial communication with a future employer, your cover letter. He emphasized it be directed properly to whom it is intended and displays who you are, your intentions, and your potential for the position. Coan's advice for a first impression is cleverly captured as "Seven ways to make seven seconds count". These are simple ways to impress, including dressing professionally, being able to talk about yourself easily and concisely, and addressing the interviewer by name. Coan ended his presentations by revisiting the importance of resumes and cover letters. As simple as it may seem, having proper grammar, spelling, and addressing the cover letter correctly can get you past the first "weeding out" of the interviewing process.

PENDELTON TURF SUPPLY

Ed Witkowski
414-640-6447
edward.witkowski@pendeltonturfsupply.com

Todd Fregien
414-640-2265
todd.fregien@pendeltonturfsupply.com

Clark Rowles
608-228-1782
clark.rowles@pendeltonturfsupply.com



**FULL LINE OF TURF PRODUCTS
CHEMICALS • TEE & GREEN SUPPLIES
TIRES & TUBES • NEW PRODUCT INFORMATION**

805 Ela Avenue
Waterford, WI 53185
Phone: 262-534-3334
Fax: 262-534-2990

**SATISFACTION
GUARANTEED**





**Joseph C. Coan CCM, CCE, Chief
Operation Officer of Westmoor
Country Club**

Coan also warned of the importance of making sure all statements are accurate and to avoid embellishing credentials on resumes.

The great task of an “expecting assistant” was the next speaker, Bryan Bergner’s main point. Bryan Bergner, current Superintendent at Westmoor Country Club, was in a very different position just a few years ago. Bergner was thrust into interim superintendent position as of the first of September and accepted the position knowing he had only a few months to demonstrate he was the person for the job. Bergner gave great personal testimony to what the transition was like, stating that he felt ready, but also admitting there were many things he still needed to learn as he took on the responsibilities of a crew who looked to him for direction and answers. Bergner went on to say he learned quickly to be prepared and to have trust in the management staff in place. In addition to all of the career changes and challenges, Bergner also set warning to the demands that the new position brings to your personal life, explaining that you really never leave the course.

To end the morning session and give merit to Bergner’s testimony, Bruce Williams finished the presentations with a talk on transitioning from assistant to Superintendent and getting the most out of your staff. Williams gave the advice that if you are looking to advance in the field, you must develop a game plan. Williams outlined a game plan with recommended compo-

nents such as 5 year or 10 year career goal, developing protocols for hiring and training, defining standards for your greens, and even creating an equipment replacement plan. These plans and standards that you take the time to lay out are all helpful in making the transition; and more importantly, aid in creating the climate you want and the work you expect from employees. Williams left us with one simple statement to ponder and take forward, “The harder I work, the luckier I get”.

With time to think on Williams’s words, we reconvened in the afternoon to listen to Carol D. Rau PHR, Golf Career Consultant, Career Advantage LLC. Rau works with the GCSAA to help members with career advancements through writing resumes and preparing for the interview process. Carol Rau started by delivering interview tools and strategies, including demonstrating how to talk about yourself briefly to convey who you are and your qualifications within the first few minutes.

Rau also focused on behavior questioning and how to answer these questions in the most effective way possible. One helpful hint was that it is acceptable to stop and collect your thoughts before answering an interview question. Additionally, Rau also discussed the importance of the interviewee being prepared to ask any questions they may have, a reminder that it is as much you interviewing them at this point to see if this position is a true



**Carol D. Rau PHR, Golf Career Con-
sultant, Career Advantage LLC**



**Bruce Williams explaining what he
looks for in Superintendent Candi-
dates.**

fit. Rau was scheduled to end the seminar with individual assistance for attendees, but due to weather conditions and transportation, she was unable to stay. Before leaving, Carol Rau gave tips and techniques to be a successful interviewee no matter the career path.

The whole seminar was extremely informative and helpful to those who have aspirations of advancing their career within the golf course industry. Thank you to all those who presented and shared their expertise. Another special thank you goes to the sponsors, Matt Schmitz for hosting the event, the rest of the Assistant Superintendent Committee, and all of those who were able to attend.

I would also like to take this opportunity as a member of the Assistant Superintendents Committee to invite anyone who has ideas, feedback, concerns, or interest in being a part of the committee to please contact a current committee member. This committee has been functioning due to the interest from assistant superintendents and solely feeds off the input from all WGCSA members. After all, the more education and networking we as assistants have, the more we can contribute to our current employers and our career. Thank you for any input and please be on the lookout for information on our next assistant superintendent event. 🌱