

Renaissance Man Ben Crenshaw Called 'Friend of Superintendents'

By KIT BRADSHAW

(Editor's Note: This article is a reprint from the GCSAA Showtime magazine published during the national conference and show. I had the opportunity to sit in on the press conference with Ben Crenshaw. He is very laid back and what I would call a regular guy, who, I might add, is very, very good at what he does, play golf!! He was very sincere when he stated that the superintendent is the most important person on the grounds. He called superintendents "unbelievable practitioners." He was very humble regarding his design efforts and praised his partnership with Bill Coore. He said that when designing he uses the principles of Old Tom Morris with regard to playability. He said he tries to design from a strategic point. He much prefers to work with a natural site rather than move soil, saying "the piece of ground must fit."

When asked if the PGA has ever discussed funding any research projects related to turf, he said that the PGA had not talked about it. However, he did say that he hoped for more cooperative work along these lines. When asked about "new equipment" and how a course can be built to match it, his response, "Saint Andrews was the test character of ground to keep technology in check." He was also quick to point out that the idea of the game does not change, just the instruments, and golf's "self policing code of ethics has stood the test of time."

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Ben Crenshaw was described as "one of the most popular players, whose interest in golf's history and memorabilia, and support of the GCSAA is well-known."

The description of Crenshaw, who received GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award at the '97 National Convention,



was given by fellow Texan, Tommy D. Witt, CGCS and GCSAA director. Sharing the podium was out-going GCSAA president, Bruce R. Williams, CGCS.

"Ben has always considered golf course superintendents to be important. We have a true friend in Ben Crenshaw," Witt said.

Crenshaw agreed that his interests are widespread, but recalled when he played in the national junior golf tournament at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass.

"For a young boy from Austin, Texas, this was a real eye opener. It was here that I first became interested in the history and architecture of a golf course. It was here that I fell in love with golf."

Crenshaw admitted that it is thrilling to be a professional player and have the opportunity to travel around the world, playing on the world's best golf courses.

But everyday play by the amateur golfer is the backbone of the game," he said. "It is amateur play that is the basis of the strategic design of golf courses. And hand-in-hand, glove-in-

glove with the design are the people who take care of the golf courses."

He praised both Harvey Penick and Old Tom Morris for their vision and their love of golf, noting that both these individuals had a significant impact on the game.

Old Tom Morris, Crenshaw said, "was a fountainhead of information on the game, as was Penick. As a greenkeeper, Old Tom Morris took care of the course, but let nature take its course. But he did so much more. His life was unbelievable.

Crenshaw said that the book, *Life of Tom Morris*, is one of his favorites.

Crenshaw said that he has seen golf course superintendents do incredible things to maintain the standards of a course, adding "the most important man or woman on the grounds is the one taking care of it."

The golf course architect, golfer and golf historian can see that there will be challenges ahead for golf course superintendents and for golf designers as well.

"Designers are doing incredible creations on what can be called

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Mini-Seminar—

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manufacturing and 65% in service. In the Minneapolis area 82% of the jobs are service related!!! This brought about the first question: What is the real goal of service?? To build trust and rapport as soon as possible!! We then started to work on defining terms and statements such as: Customer and moments of truth. Very simply, a customer is anyone that you build trust and rapport with and that moment of truth is anytime you communicate with a customer or anyone. It really came down to information (your ability) and emotion (your willingness) related to service. Are you willing and able to serve??? Not just customers but your employees and others?

The communications module focused on getting your message across. We all took a test to help us determine our own unique communication style. Are you visually-oriented, verbally-oriented or kinesthetically (doing) oriented? What this told us was that we all communicate (send and receive) information just a little differently and when it comes to training employees or a grounds meeting, we need to make a special effort to "cover all the bases" in our communication. We can all relate to this very easily if we think



109 attended the Mini-Seminar but we had room for more!

about the job of trimming trees. This would be quite difficult to train someone with only verbal instruction. It may be a bit easier with a drawing (visual) but we all know that to really get the message across you just have to get out there and try it.

The day was well worth the time spent. I always gauge a seminar by the "real world take home stuff" that I get out of it; this one was a 10 out of 10. Unfortunately, we had plenty of room for more participants. I think we tend to take for granted the education we

have available to us as a professional association. This may lead to apathy and nonparticipating by some, which is a terrible mistake. This seminar was absolutely top drawer, as good or better than anything we have ever offered in recent years. It's just too bad we didn't have a full house.

THANK YOU to Steve Young, Tom Parent, Pat Walton, James Gardner and Jim Nicol for the assistance you provided in bringing us this opportunity to learn and grow.

— Rob Panuska, Editor

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throwaway properties," he said. "We are returning to a more classic design, which I like. I feel the timeless architectural designs are the best."

Crenshaw said that he and his partner, William Coore, do a couple of golf course designs a year because they like to spend time on each project and want to keep their small crew together for each project.

"I was lucky enough to have a partner who is an agronomist," he said, "and he has taught me so much about this field. In turn, I try to work on the playability of the course design."

Crenshaw said that the move of golf professionals into design may give the public the impression that a golf professional can automatically become a golf course designer, but said that perception is wrong.

"I think this perception does an injustice to the golf course architect, who has spent so much time and energy learn-

ing how to design courses," he said.

Water will be a challenge to both the architects and the superintendents because water resources will be sorely depleted in years to come, Crenshaw said. On a practical side, that means the standards on the golf course may be changed when it comes to green. For golf course superintendents to overcome their members' objections to these conditions, the green committees must be well-informed.

For everyone involved in golf, the increase in performance equipment is presenting a challenge as well.

"I know this question about the impact of equipment on design drives Pete Dye nuts, but it is a good question," Crenshaw said. "We are at the critical, red line when it comes to equipment, and I'm beginning to agree with Jack (Nicklaus) that we must do something about the golf balls that are played in professional tournaments."