

There's No Better Time To Network

By NATE USELDING

Assistant Superintendent, Dellwood Hills Golf Club

Recently, a couple of local superintendents got together in a round table discussion at North Oaks Country Club and invited their assistants to come along. The superintendents gathered in one room talking about winter preparation while we talked about our future aspirations. Walking into this meeting, I was a bit nervous not knowing anyone but after the meeting I felt more comfortable with my fellow peers.

What a great opportunity for assistants to get together and discuss issues pertaining to them. Most assistants know of, or who, superintendents are but how many different assistants do they know? If we are the next generation of superintendents, isn't knowing our fellow peers essential? Networking is a key to our success and the cliché saying stands true, it's not what you know but who you know as well. Whom do we, as assistants, network with to help us in our career? First, we start with whom we already know and those key players are our former employers and professors.

Do we get exposed to enough people with whom we could count on in a time of need? Of course we do, only if we take advantage of the opportunities when they present themselves. Being proactive in situations where you don't know anyone, it is as simple as saying, "Hi, my name is Nate Uselding." We cannot be shy, especially within our own organization.

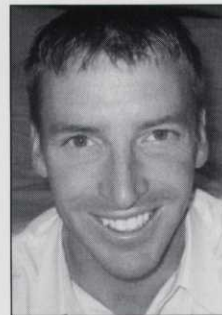
Sometimes, as assistants, we forget to continue talking to our former employers or professors and these are people we can count on for professional insight. We already built a solid relationship with them over the years and that is most important with networking and building relationships. If you continue to keep in contact with them, more opportunities or help you may receive. You can always turn to your current superintendent for help but what if you need to look elsewhere?

Can you count on a former employer whom you haven't spoken to for three years? Like the old saying goes "what have you done for me lately" might be your answer. Not only should we look within our industry to network but there are a couple other people who play a big role. Members, general managers, golf pro's, salesmen and relatives can help us out, sometimes when we least expect it.

Two years ago, I moved from Wisconsin to Minnesota and started my networking. The first person I contacted was a member at Edina Country Club who connected me with the superintendent there. He introduced me to the MGCSA website where all my questions were answered. This past summer, I thanked Mike Kelly for his help with my transition to Minnesota. Taking the time and thanking someone shows you are appreciative for their time in helping you out and helps build your relationship.

How can we get people to remember us after we meet them? First, have an introduction setting yourself apart from the rest. Prepare and practice an introduction selling yourself in less than a minute. You want to keep the other person interested but not take over the whole conversation. Tell them something interesting they will remember you by because you want to separate yourself from the rest.

Hand out your business card next; this allows you to accurately exchange personal information with someone. When you pass them out, ask for theirs too and follow up with them by e-mail, thanking them for their time. If you don't have a business card, it is a good idea to get one. You can easily design and print your own cards at a reasonable price by purchasing them at Office Max. You should include the club's name and address, your name and title along with your business phone, cell phone and your e-mail address. This gives others three different ways to contact you.



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Burned!

By ERIC PETERS

Superintendent, North Links Golf Course

I finally got Labor Day weekend off. I was picked up in Mankato by my driver in a very nice van and was taken to St. Paul where I spent a nice relaxing 11 days in a very expensive hotel. Every morning I had breakfast in bed then proceeded to get a sponge bath by a man named Wayne. It's not what it sounds like. For one, Wayne was the name of the nurse, and two, the only reason I was relaxed was that I was on good pain meds.

It was business as usual at North Links on Sep. 3rd. We got the crew going on the course with the exception of one guy that called in letting me know he was running about 15 minutes late. I was a bit irritated by his being late, yet thankful that he called to let me know. In hindsight, his getting there when he did was God sent and saved me at least 15 minutes of pain. After making a call to the local sheriff's department to let them know that we were having a controlled burn of a brush pile. I proceeded to put 4 gallons of diesel fuel on the pile, then another 4 gallons of gasoline on that to get the wet wood hot enough to burn. Using a little more gasoline, I made a trail in the dirt to light the fire from a distance. I gave it a couple of minutes to soak while I put away the buckets that were used to carry the fuel. When I came back to the brush pile, I could still see the trail in the dirt so without a second thought, I bent over with a lighter and spun the flint. At

that moment my vacation began.

Fire immediately filled the air around me. My first reaction was to close my eyes and run away. After getting a couple steps away I went to the ground and

another radio ready, the gentleman that called in late was standing in the shop looking at my face with concern. He got in the driver's seat of my truck and took me to the ER in Mankato.

While driving to the hospital, I still didn't understand what happened. I had burned brush like this dozens of times with no problems. I called my wife on the way to let her know what had happened and that I wouldn't know how bad it was until I saw a doctor. By the time we got to the ER I think that I was coming out of shock because the pain was getting worse and worse so an IV was started and morphine was used to help with the pain. The doctor there

found that I had burned my arms and face. I was wearing a visor so I had a band of untouched hair around my head and everything that had clothes covering it was untouched by the fire.

Because they were not comfortable with a burn of this size, I was taken to Regions Hospital in St. Paul. The doctor there asked if it had been humid and I told him that in fact it was foggy at the time of the fire. **He then told me that high humidity holds down the fumes of gasoline and creates an explosive environment, and that if I would have done it a few hours later it might not have happened.** Apparently they get a lot of farmers coming in with the same type of burns.

He reassured me that my face would heal with no scarring but they might have to graft areas of my right hand and arm. Two days before the grafting was scheduled, the skin on my right arm peeled off and a layer of good skin was present, so the grafts were not needed. I have nothing but good things to say about the burn unit at Regions. They have a top-notch group of people there and seem to really know their stuff. They even have an annual benefit tournament at North Oaks.



Megan, Eric and Kirsten Peters soon after the accident.

rolled my face in the dirt while thinking "Why did my head catch on fire and when will it stop burning? Is it safe to stand up now?" So after doing this for a few seconds I stood up to see if my shirt was burning. When I looked at my arm I noticed that a layer or two of skin was hanging down below my elbows.

Realizing very quickly that this was going to need medical attention, I calmly walked over to my cart and reached for my walky-talky to call for someone to drive me to ER. I noticed that my hands were shaking and my radio must have fallen off my belt when I was on the ground. I really didn't want to go back by the fire so I drove my cart to the shop to get another radio. Before I could get

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Burned—

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After spending a few days around people that were damaged beyond recognition, I can't help but feel very fortunate about how things could have been different. My eyes were not damaged, the only scarring that I have is on the back of my right hand and elbow, I didn't have that much pain, and my skin is healing unbelievably fast. I attribute this to the prayers of my family and friends. God works in funny ways and I know that I will be a better husband and father as a result, even though I didn't realize this when it happened.

You can imagine all of the horrible images that were running through Diane's (my wife) head by the time she got to the hospital. I think it was harder on her than it was on me. She faithfully handled life with our three kids for those 11 days that I was in the hospital just as she has for the last 10 years. God has blessed me with a fantastic woman and three great kids that I appreciate now more than ever.

When I got out of the hospital, I was a little stir crazy. I was only home for one day before going back to work and that

was about all that I could handle. I was worried about how the course was doing and couldn't handle being away, yet when I came back everything was running smoothly and hadn't skipped a beat.

This was Korey Edholm's (my assistant) first season in the position and he really took the bull by the horns for those 12 days. The whole crew did for that matter. They all know what to do and got the job done. I can't imagine working for a better company. Even the owner of the course stopped by the hospital and was

not only concerned about how I was doing, but also how my family was, and if there was anything that he could do to help. That kind of support at work is worth a lot more than a huge paycheck.

It is very humbling to tell this story to my peers, but if it will prevent even one person from making the same mistake that I did, it is worth it. After talking to a lot of you at the Green Expo, it sounds like I was not the only one who lit fires this way. I have no problem with using fuel to get a fire going, just don't use gaso-



line.

We have been doing a lot of tree trimming this past year and have had two more brush fires since then. We now use diesel fuel and a torch. The sound of 30 foot flames still makes my heart pound but I know that it is in control and has no explosive tendencies. Another option is to call your local fire department and ask them to come and do the burn.

Take care of yourself. Life changes in a blink of an eye.

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In Bounds

By JACK MACKENZIE, CGCS
North Oaks Golf Club

My family has a history of Alzheimer's disease. Aunt Ellie, my maternal great Aunt, became a victim of the syndrome in her 80s, as did my maternal grandmother also in her 80s. And my mother may have been showing signs of either Alzheimer's or dementia shortly before her passing at the age of 76. No one will ever know for sure.

But one thing that is for certain, the process of watching a loved one lose his or her sanity is heart breaking for everyone involved. The symptoms can range from simple personality changes to hallucinations, arguments, striking out and other violent behavior. Losing interest in previously enjoyed pastimes and losing awareness of who you are can also manifest. What could be worse you ask?

How about witnessing this transformation within yourself as I did for so many years while I wrestled with my alcoholic tendencies. Yes, many of you have read my story before, but some may not remember it or perhaps need to reread and reflect upon the detrimental effects of a compulsive behavior.

Just what is an example of a compulsive problem? How about drinking a pint of vodka on the drive home followed by a six-pack of beer consumed casually to "cover up" the smell of booze upon your breath. Or perhaps saying morning prayers to have the hangover go away only to begin drinking mid afternoon. Maybe you have the inability to pass up the pull-tab box in a bar or the consistent weekend trips to the casinos. How often do you call your bookie? Are you plagued by a desire for illegal drugs such as cocaine or even marijuana? Or are you running up credit when your bank account is empty?

The consumption of alcohol was my compulsion of choice. And with that repeated desire came the break-up of my family, the exploitation of my hard-earned dollars, the paranoia of being "found out" and the loss of my sanity. For 20 years my desire, and choice, to drink caused me to do things many would consider just plain nuts.

With haste every evening I drove to one of six different liquor stores for that bottle and six-pack. Evening phone conversations were often repeated and too often not remembered. Hobbies once enjoyed became secondary unless they allowed me to drink at the same time. Mood swings made me difficult to live with. Gosh, at times I found it difficult to live with myself! My addiction to alcohol was driving me crazy. And here is the kicker, I knew it was happening the whole time and watched myself spin in a slow motion spiral as I searched for spiders in my empty bottle of vodka.

Eventually, and thank God for it, my fear of insanity drove me to a psychologist, forced me to admit that I had a problem and then caused me to search for help.

On March 5th, 1995 I took my last drink. The following day I began the rest of my life, sober and appreciating the gift I have been given. The first month was a challenge, but I was empowered with the tools necessary to limit my compulsion to desire without acting upon the obsession. Of primary help was the code of the recovering alcoholic, the 12 Steps.

If you are like me and carry a compulsive behavior, be it gambling, drug addiction, obsessive spending or any sanity-stripping

fixation, then the Steps may be able to help you overcome your challenge. That is of course, only if you want to regain your sanity. And that is a key to success.

A person has to want to find the "cure" more than continue the compulsion. Nobody can do it for you. It boils down to choice. Indeed when first in treatment I was told that I had a disease. And believe me that alone helped my stick with the program. But after witnessing the actual disease of Alzheimer's I question if the desire for alcohol is an illness or a compulsive choice. Upon thoughtful reflection, I had and still have a strong compulsive tendency. But within my personal program is the freedom of choice.

As I came to find out more and more about my sad state of mind I learned that I had the internal support system to stop drinking, my own "greater power" is there with me at all times.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

- 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- 4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character.
- 7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
- 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

This very second, with the help of my "greater power" I choose not to drink. And in five minutes or five hours I will choose not to place myself in a situation where I have to pin my insanity to the mat in an effort to maintain my sobriety.

The beauty of my program goes well beyond a conscious effort not to drink. Controlling my sanity is dependent upon my understanding that there are many things in my life I have no control over. However, there are things in my life that I need the courage to control. Hence the often heard and seen prayer:

God, Please grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Understand I am not trying to pontificate a religious perspective. But rather provide each of you, my friends, the opportunity and tools to conquer your own demons if you have the desire to. For those of you suffering with a compulsive behavior, get help. It could save you coin, it could save your relationships and it could save your health. But most importantly it will save you from going insane.

Beach Party at Spring Hill

By MIKE SONNEK

Assistant Superintendent, Spring Hill Golf Club

During the fall of 2004 at Spring Hill Golf Club we underwent an in-house conversion of our bunker sand. Many clubs have experienced the same complaints about bunker sand that we were hearing and so I would like to share with you the story of how we came to the decision to change the sand, our methods of doing it and the colorful characters that helped make this project such a success.

Spring Hill is a Tom Fazio designed golf course in Orono, Minnesota that opened in 1999. At time of construction, we decided to use a locally available masons blend sand in our bunkers that had a natural brown color and is similar structurally to the sand used in our greens mix. This sand has a physical description of being subrounded to rounded. We tested this sand for firmness with a tool called a penetrometer.

The measurement of 2.2cm/kg² classified our sand as having a slight tendency to bury the ball. This sand was less expensive than the alternatives and looked and performed well as long as it stayed moist. When this sand dried out it became soft and unstable, resulting in many plugged lies and poor playability.

It was always difficult to rake the sand smooth regardless of whether it was wet or dry. Within a couple of seasons we started to hear member complaints about the softness of our sand, the number of plugged lies and the inability to rake it smooth.

As with many Fazio courses our bunkers have a lot of contour with sloped sand faces that are difficult to maintain. The contours of our bunkers force us to hand rake because we are unable to enter our bunkers with a mechanical bunker rake. As a result the sand never became compacted as it would over time by using a mechanical bunker rake. Another factor that leads to bunker sand compaction is

normal subgrade contamination. We experienced virtually no contamination because during construction we treated the subgrade of our bunkers with a soil stabilizer called Klingstone. (For more



Using the conveyor to empty the bunker.

information on Klingstone you can refer to an article on the product in the Oct. 2004 issue of Hole Notes.)

In 2003 we decided to do some course bunker trials to compare different bunker sands side by side with our existing bunkers. We also wanted to let these bunker trials overwinter so we could make a fair comparison over a full season.

Initially we tried altering depths with our existing sand to see if we could reduce the plugged lies and improve the playability. We tried reducing these to 1" and 2" with nightly irrigation of .20". Plugged lies were reduced but we were unable to maintain any consistency at such shallow depths.

Furthermore, our bunkers were originally designed to hold 6" on the faces and 6-10" in the base. With this design we had to keep extra sand around the bunker edges to cover the lips. We found we were still having balls plug in this ring of deeper sand. Keeping less sand in the bunkers also made them more susceptible to washouts during rainstorms. Our second trial had a face depth of 2" and a base depth of

3" with .20" nightly irrigation. This sand played firmer but would soften when the upper 1" would dry out around noon.

Our third trial consisted of removing our original sand and replacing it with a

50/50 blend of our original sand and the Ohio Signature sand. The Ohio Signature sand is a 100% angular sand. Our hope with the blend was to improve the firmness and playability of the sand while still maintaining a natural color. Color was a major factor in choosing our original sand and we were hoping to avoid the contrast with the bright color of the Ohio sand. We maintained this blend at a depth of 1 1/2"-3" with nightly irrigation of .20". The sand maintained stability and we were able to rake it smooth.

The penetrometer value for this blend was 2.65 cm/kg² which is classified as having a low tendency to bury the ball.

We received positive feedback from the membership on the look and playability of the blended sand. The sand stayed firm even without the nightly irrigation. One of the drawbacks of the blend was that the two sands would tend to segregate following irrigation or rain with the fines settling out and the coarser material migrating to the top.

An additional drawback would be the expense because this sand would be a custom blend for our course. We also tried to create this blend by only removing half of the existing sand in one of our bunkers replacing the removed portion with Ohio Signature sand. We tilled the two sands together in the bunker until they were visually blended. We were hoping to be able to match the 50/50 blend while avoiding the cost and labor of completely emptying out the old sand and replacing it with the blend. We found it difficult

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to achieve a uniform blend. We were still getting 'fried egg' lies but not as frequently as with our original sand.

Our fourth trial was 25% of our original sand and 75% of the Ohio Signature sand at a 4"-6" depth. This blend stayed firm without any nightly watering but was noticeably whiter than our original sand or the 50/50 blend.

Our fifth trial was using the Ohio 50/50 blend sand at the 4" and 6" depths. This blend is 50% Ohio Signature and 50% Ohio 535 (100% semi-angular sand). The penetrometer measurement for Ohio 50/50 is 2.8 cm/kg² compared to the 2.2 cm/kg² of our original sand. This sand proved to be the firmest of all of our trials and also received positive feedback regarding playability.

The Ohio 50/50 is readily available so it would be less expensive than our custom blends. Some concerns we had from a maintenance perspective included the increased raking required to keep the sand from becoming too compacted, potential slower drainage in the future and the effect of this sand when it is splashed on the greens.

The Ohio 50/50 is coarser than our original sand and was very noticeable when splashed on the greens and would this structurally different sand lead to hard spots on the greens in the future? There was also the aesthetic question of how the white sand would affect the natural look we wanted for the golf course.

After going through a season with our variety of bunker trials it was determined that we would switch to the Ohio 50/50 blend sand based on its playability and its availability. This sand also has a good track record locally and nationally.

After evaluating the various expenses for the project including such things as sand cost, labor, rental equipment and other materials, we decided to do the project in-house. However, the only way we would pursue this is if we didn't compromise our normal course conditioning. We also wanted to minimize the impact of the project on the golfers so we tried to be working on only two holes at a time.

We wanted to be repairing and refilling the bunkers right behind the crew that was removing the old sand. With this approach we felt that we would be better able to control the project schedule and expenses by doing it in house. Therefore, our game plan was to bring in some temporary staff for roughly 10 weeks and rent

the necessary additional equipment for moving the sand around the course. The rented equipment consisted of a mechanical 25' conveyor to aid in removing the old sand, an additional skidloader, a tractor and trailers. We did purchase a trailer with a hydraulic lift so we could dump the new sand into the bunkers without having to enter them.

In addition, during this process, we decided to do some contouring around the bunkers for water diversion.

Depending on the grade surrounding the bunkers we would create channels and build up berms to keep surface water from flowing into the bunkers. We hoped that the combination of diverting the water before it reached the bunkers and having the full 4"-6" of sand in the bunkers would help reduce washouts from rain.

Towards the end of August we started to work on a couple bunkers to refine our methods and come to an estimate of how long the process would take. As I mentioned earlier, our bunkers are contoured so we are unable to enter them with large equipment. This meant we would need to hand shovel roughly 600 tons of our old sand out of the bunkers and a 1,000 tons of new sand back in! Our temporary workers would need to be some hearty souls.

After cleaning out the bunkers we would repair any degraded lips, clean out the drain tiles and reshape the subgrade to avoid having any bunker edges with more than a 4-inch lip. We didn't want to have any exposed soil lips that might degrade into the light-colored new sand. With a 4" lip and 4" of sand on the faces we would avoid the exposed soil edge. Many of our bunker lips were 6"-12" deep. To correct this we used a compactible sand/clay mixture to build up the subgrade in the areas where the lips were too deep. We would then treat these areas with the Klingstone soil stabilizer.

After the first two bunkers it was apparent the most time-consuming part of the process was going to be emptying out the bunkers. We contacted a temporary employment service to provide eight workers to come in and work on cleaning out the bunkers. Tuesday, September 7, would be the first official day of the project. Our goal was to finish by Halloween.

The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day to start our project. I was very enthused and looking forward to hit the ground running. My enthusiasm waned somewhat as only two of our eight temp workers showed up for our 8 o'clock start time. Two more showed up around 8:30.

We had our conveyor set up in a fairway bunker on hole #1. With the five of us working we had this bunker cleaned out in a couple of hours and proceeded to move the conveyor to the greenside bunker. At this point two of the four temporary workers had decided that they had had enough. Progress slowed considerably. After lunch another temporary worker decided to abandon the project. The crew was down to myself and Dave. Dave and I had struck up a good

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conversation during the morning work. I was impressed by his ability to accurately state the time of day based on the sun position in the sky. Dave and I looked at each other with the sweat rolling off of us and we came to the conclusion that this was going to be quite a long project if he and I were the only ones shoveling.

Dave told me that he was a manager of a local baseball team, "Los Bravos," or The Braves. He said that some of the guys on his team were looking for work and they would be reliable. I told him that sounded great and to bring them in.

The next day we were joined by half of the team as Dave brought six guys with him. Within two weeks the Braves were moving along at a terrific pace. They had quickly picked up on what needed to get done and were so reliable that I was able to break away and spend more time with our staff on repairs that needed to be done to our emptied bunkers and start getting them refilled with the new sand. We were able to draw from our seasonal staff to do most of the bunker repair work. We

brought in an additional six temporary workers two or three days a week to spread out the new sand and check for depths. This second group of temporary workers also did a very good job and helped move the project along at a good pace.

By the first week of October we were on our last couple of holes that had some bunkers that required reshaping. At this point we had moved roughly 600 tons of sand out of and back into the bunkers. If the weather held up we would finish by the end of October as scheduled. We had also amassed two huge piles of our old bunker sand. We wanted to incorporate the old sand into our fairway topdressing program in 2005.

We tried to keep it the sand clean when emptying out the bunkers but it was too contaminated to use for our fairway topdressing. Since we had such a large quantity of sand we hired a service to screen it for us. The sand was screened to 1/8" to remove mainly pearock that had migrated out from the drainage trenches along with other miscellaneous contaminants such as weeds and soil clumps from degraded lips.

Some rain showed up in October to

slow us down a little bit but we were able to complete our last two holes that needed bunker reshaping.

We finished the project on Friday, October 22, a week ahead of schedule. Everyone was pleased with how the project went, especially the maintenance staff. The concern over the color of the bunker sand was alleviated when the membership liked the look of the new bunker sand with the contrast of the bright sand against the background. They were also happy with the firmness and playability of the new sand. This was a large project to take on in-house. With the way the project started I was anxious about how it would turn out. Without the dedicated efforts of our staff, Los Bravos, and our other temporary staff it would not have gone as smoothly. Whether you decide to contract out a project like this or tackle it in-house, finding good people for the job is the key. Some final numbers from the project:

Spring Hill staff labor: 1,160 hours
Bunker crew (los bravos): 1,384 hours
Additional temp. staff: 505 hours
Ohio 50/50 sand delivered: 1,048 tons

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In the end we did end up leaning a little more heavily on our staff than we had planned. However a good portion of the hours were in October when our daily maintenance schedule allowed for some more flexibility.

One week after we had finished the project we received a fast falling 2" rain. In the past, with our old sand, this would have meant a full day of shoveling up washed out bunkers. You could see lots of smiles on the maintenance staff as there was nary a washout to be seen. The impact of our water diversion work and having the correct volume of a more compactible sand in the bunkers



Creating a berm above the bunker to divert water.



Los Bravos

showed an immediate benefit.

There are many different ways to go about a project like this and have a successful outcome.

This was just one example. Whether you contract out or tackle it in-house like we did, be sure to address any issues that may have a long term impact on your maintenance procedures. As long as you are working in the bunkers, this is the perfect time to do the necessary water diversion or bunker reshaping. If you have subgrade contamination, implement a long term solution whether laying down a mat or applying a soil stabilizer. The reduced maintenance hours down the road will make the extra effort during your renovation worthwhile.

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My First Business Trip

By NATE USELDING

Assistant Superintendent, Dellwood Hills Golf Club

I was headed to Orlando for my first business trip. The big leagues were calling and I was going to the Golf Industry Show. You see, I am a first timer and attending this year was a big deal to me. Before leaving, I pictured the Minnesota Green Expo but on a much larger scale with more ritz, glamour and people. This was it. I was here to learn from the best, take in new ideas and apply them to our golf course. I thought I had everything planned out and ready to go, but I wasn't ready for what I experienced in Orlando.

The First Day

My first day was Tuesday and I was taking a seminar on operations management. This class was appealing because I am looking for new ideas on running our operation more efficiently after recently moving into our new maintenance facility. I got lost driving to the Conference Center and arrived 15 minutes late. I found my seat in the front row and began to look around. I couldn't believe that there were about 75 people in the room and it was full. I liked this, a smaller class size with people participating and interacting. The instructor, Bruce Williams, really kept me interested with all the stories he told. I took home some good information and had an idea for an action plan on our course.

At lunch, I headed outside to enjoy the warm weather before going back to class. I walked out the doors and the first person I saw was a buddy from college. Go figure, I travel 1,300 miles and see someone who now lives an hour away from me. I didn't think seeing anyone I knew would be possible, especially here.

In Your Face Day

Wednesday was an eye opener because my class was on conflict resolution. Today, I positioned myself up front by choice and looking back, I set myself up for what happened. This class was in your face, hands on dealing with conflict. The instructor, Bob Sexton, gave me the business right off the bat. I looked like

fresh blood to him and within minutes of the class starting, he wanted to know all my vitals. I performed like a puppet and he had his way with me. I felt about two feet tall when I sat down but that is why I took the class. Handling conflict isn't a strong point of mine and I wanted to learn the right way of dealing with it. The class settled down in the afternoon session and

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I took home some key points on handling member conflict.

Jack Nicklaus' Day

The day I was waiting for, Thursday. I wanted to see Jack Nicklaus receive the Old Tom Morris award, so I arrived early and attended the Innovative Superintendent sessions. This was in a rather large banquet room and I got a great seat right up front so I could see Jack and maybe get a couple pictures. I was pretty excited on where my seat was until my boss, Eric Peterson, told me Jack would be appearing in the room next door. I'm sure I wasn't the only one in the room thinking he was up next. So, we made our way next door into another huge banquet room, only this one had a stage with lights and big screen televisions. I should've known Jack wouldn't come out on a makeshift stage that was in the other room. We found our spot near the back of the room and listened to the opening session. When Jack finally came out it was quite comical. He couldn't read his handwriting for his speech and got a bit flustered. Jack handled it well and gave a great speech.

The Trade Show

After the opening session, the trade show floor opened for the first time and Eric and I were off to the races. I wanted

to follow Eric around and see how he covered the floor. His mission for Thursday: complete the solutions challenge. You had to correctly solve a problem at 17 different booths and collect a stamp to complete the challenge. We started at the far end by the clubhouse solution center and made our way around to the other side. The game was great, there was chaos everywhere and it wasn't all about the larger exhibitors. I'm glad I followed someone with experience around on the trade show floor; otherwise I would have been lost.

The trade show was unbelievable. I was in awe the first day with the size and the amount of companies presenting their ideas.

Some ideas were practical and some not but you had to go around and see them all. I quickly learned how fast your legs tired from walking around on the concrete. The trick was entering any booth because the padding under their carpet was like a party for your feet. How could you not stop and look around while giving your legs a rest?

Friday

On Friday, we walked the floor in reverse and saw a whole different aspect of the show. This time we hit all the big name booths we avoided on Thursday and I met many different salesmen in the process. I also took advantage of the 30-minute career workshops offered during the day. These presentations focused on assistants and building their foundation for becoming a superintendent.

You couldn't physically be in two places at once and, as a first timer, I wanted to see and experience everything. You really need to plan out your day because it is easy to get sidetracked with so much going on. After attending this show, it opened my eyes to all the opportunities in our industry that are at our fingertips.

Now it is up to me to take this information home and use it at our club. It was also very helpful to have my boss show me around because it will allow me to feel more confident in the years to come. Thanks, Eric, for a great trip.