

# Annual Awards

The GCSANC Turfgrass Excellence Award is presented to an individual for their high level of achievement as they uphold quality standards in turfgrass maintenance. Award criteria takes into consideration: overall course condition, conservation and environmental factors, course activity and maintenance budget. This honor will be awarded in two categories.



## **Turfgrass Excellence Award, Public Category**

### **George Young**

San Jose Municipal Golf Course  
San Jose, CA

George Young started in the turf care industry working 12 years for the Pebble Beach Company as a spray technician and project man at Spyglass Hill GC and Pebble Beach GL on the Monterey Peninsula. Next, he was off to Rancho Canada GC (Carmel, CA)

where he served seven years as an assistant golf course superintendent. To this day, he still remembers the two major floods he endured during his tenure at the 36-hole public facility located next to the Carmel River.

In 1999, Young accepted the golf course superintendent position at San Jose Municipal Golf Course (San Jose, CA), a South Bay facility owned by the City of San Jose and operated by Rawitser Golf. If you've never had the chance to visit a busy, Silicon Valley-based municipal course, you might want to spend an eye-opening day with Young, at facility that welcomes golfers 365 days a year.

Now, in his 13th year at this popular municipal course (a course, known by the locals, simply as "Muni"), Young knows that the tee sheet remains full and golfers are Number 1, which may require adjusting crew schedules to complete on-course projects. It never fails, no matter how busy the course might be, Young and his staff get the job done, and well, at that.

While many golf courses experienced some decline in business in recent years, San Jose Municipal GC remained solid in rounds, keeping Young and his crew of 12 in demand when caring for the 100-acre parcel which also includes a highly-frequented driving range and practice center.

This par-72, Robert Muir Graves-designed course consists of ryegrass and bermudagrass fairways with a bent-poa mix, and bentgrass greens with some poa. The course relies on both recycled water and well water recycled for fairways and rough, and well water for greens. Common practice at the facility is to minimize the use of chemicals whenever possible.

Young and his team have redone all 18 greens and recently he's been working on drainage projects. Next priority will be a tree moving project with the ultimate goal of elevating interest and increased shot strategy for the low to the mid-low indexed player.

Young enjoys his work as well as the crew he surrounds himself with on a daily basis. As for his management philosophy, Young believes you should use everyone to the "best of their strengths" and work with them on their weaker areas, too...but always make sure to recognize their talent and strengths.



## **Turfgrass Excellence Award, Private Category**

### **Ken Williams, CGCS**

Stanford University Golf Course,  
Stanford, CA

When it came to selecting a finalist for Turfgrass Excellence in the Private Category, certified golf course superintendent Ken Williams quickly came to mind. Not only is he responsible for a well-maintained university golf course in the San Francisco Bay Area,

Williams is also responsible for overseeing the 30-acre Siebel Varsity Golf Training Complex which has been touted as the best in all of collegiate golf.

Prior to arriving at Stanford University GC in 1995, Williams worked at Rancho Bernardo Inn & CC (San Diego, CA) and also at La Quinta Hotel GC (La Quinta, CA).

The Stanford University GC (originally designed by George Thomas with construction managed by William "Billy" Bell) continues to be in premier condition today, due to the diligent work of Williams and his crew. Ranked No. 6 on *Golfweek's* Best Campus Course list, the course is enjoyed by university students, faculty, members, and alum, and has hosted scores of notable tournaments over its 83-year history including: NCAA men's and women's championships, Pac-10 championships, U.S. Open Qualifiers, the USGA Junior Championship and the Western Amateur.

When you ask Williams about his maintenance philosophy he'll be the first to tell you he leans towards natural and sustainable. At Stanford they conduct very few preventive treatments for pests, and make a point to spot treat most weeds and diseases. Williams works faithfully to keep bent grass the primary turf on the greens, because it requires far less fertilizer and chemical inputs. According to Williams that work entails doing things "the old school way" (similar to a British greenkeeper's model) which means more sand, less fertilizer, lots of iron and no core aeration. Overdoing the cultural practices like verti-cutting aerating, ultra-low mowing and heavy feeding shift the balance away from the favored turf types. He also believes that maintenance practices dictate what type of turf will persist on the rest of the course, and since California's climate is so mild many types of grass grow but few will truly thrive. Williams tends to let nature and the maintenance practices dictate what type of turf grows where, and in what season.

A former GCSANC Course Superintendent of the Year honoree, Williams also shows his dedication to the game through his volunteerism. He has served on the GCSANC board of directors, hosted Nor Cal Chapter fundraising events and a highly successful Field Day, too. And, while he's a successful blogger today, the GCSANC will always be grateful to Williams for his years of dedicated work as the chapter's newsletter editor.