

THRU THE GREEN

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

July / August 2025

Northern California Chapter
GCSAA
GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Northern California Takes Center Stage

*Three Northern California
Courses to Host National
Tournaments*

CYPRESS POINT CLUB Host of the 50th Walker Cup

Photo by Martin Miller

MONTEREY PENINSULA COUNTRY CLUB Host of the 38th U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship

Photo by Martin Miller



Inside This Issue

- Superintendent Profiles
- From the Capitol
- President's Message

THE OLYMPIC CLUB Host of the 125th U.S. Amateur Golf Championship

The Olympic Club / Evan Schiller



2025

TRI-CHAPTER MEETING



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ON THE COVER

L to R: Cypress Point Club, Monterey Peninsula Country Club, and The Olympic Club are gearing up to host USGA championships in the next few months.



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NORCALENDAR

Tri-Chapter Meeting
Monday, August 11

Berkeley Country Club

Emerging Technology Expo
Thursday, October 23

McKelvey Park, Mountain View

Annual Meeting
Monday, November 17

Peninsula Golf & Country Club

Holiday Meeting
Friday, December 5

Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa

THRU THE GREEN

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California

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President's Message

By **JOE BUDINICH**, *Peninsula Golf and Country Club*

As I write this article, my staff is completing late summer aerification, and I am sure most of you are gearing up for your own aerifications in a few weeks. Though the weather hasn't been as hot this summer as years past, the wind seems to be relentless, which causes challenges in itself. As we transition to fall, I would like to bring up that we have a few more events on the calendar that you should consider signing up for:

- *Tri-Chapter Meeting – Monday, August 11th at Berkeley Country Club*
- *Emerging Technology Expo – October 23rd at McKelvey Park in Mountain View*
- *Annual Meeting – November 17th at Peninsula Golf and Country Club*
- *Holiday Meeting – December 5th at Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa*

The Emerging Technology Expo looks to have a great line-up of drones, autonomous mowers, GPS sprayers and other items that will ultimately make our jobs easier and more efficient. We will also be hosting the Holiday Meeting at the Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa again this year on December 5th. This event and venue received rave reviews by those who attended last year, so reserve your spot as soon as registration opens.

I would like to point out that we have three national events being hosted in this region this late summer and early fall. The U.S. Amateur is being hosted at The Olympic Club on August 11th, the Walker Cup will be hosted at Cypress Point Club on September 6th; and the Women's Mid-Amateur is being hosted at Monterey Peninsula Country Club on October 4th. If you haven't done so already, please sign up to volunteer or attend these events.

In conclusion, if any of you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors next year, please reach out to me or another board member. We are looking to fill a couple director positions and an Assistant Superintendent liaison position.

Sincerely,

Joe Budinich





Executive Director's Report

By MARC CONNERLY, GCSANC

The GCSANC Board met late last month, and there are two exciting initiatives to share with members.

First, the organization remains committed to addressing the shortage of talent entering the superintendent profession. Our turf scholarship program and our intern housing assistance both focus on this need, and at the recent Board meeting the Board discussed a letter received from the San Joaquin County Office of Education asking GCSANC to collaborate on an apprenticeship program for greenskeepers.

The Board agreed to pursue the concept further, and we have invited San Joaquin County representatives to join us on the next Board call.

Michigan formed an apprenticeship program for superintendents within the last few years, and it is my understanding that the program has been very successful, so there is a precedent.

While this is still the very early stages, conceptually this is an exciting opportunity for GCSANC to pursue.

The second initiative focuses on mental health for superintendents, a topic that can be difficult for many to discuss, but one that is very important. The Board had a lengthy discussion on the topic and there was an overwhelming sentiment that it is a subject that deserves attention from the association.

Watch for articles, information and mental health resources from the association in the coming months.

On a final note, GCSANC received a Club Procure Chapter Education Grant in the amount of \$250 through GCSAA. The grant is intended to help fund the Tri-Chapter meeting, which is scheduled at Berkeley Country Club in just a few days. GCSANC is grateful to Club Procure and GCSAA for that grant.

Marc Connerly

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From the Field

By JEFF JENSEN, GCSAA Field Staff, Southwest Region



Hope this finds our GCSANC members doing well and surviving the difficult summer months. I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming Northern California Tri-Chapter Meeting at Berkeley Country Club. It should be an enjoyable day!

There have been some exciting things going on at GCSAA as we continue to increase our focus on workforce development. The GCSAA Training Video Series was released on May 27. Free to GCSAA members, the crew-based videos cover topics from cup cutting and greens mowing to bunker raking, hand watering and more. This 11-video series aims to help superintendents attract, train and retain employees. The videos can be accessed at <https://learn.gcsaa.org/pages/video-training-series?zs=AHEEN1&zl=dfmm7>. The videos are currently being translated to Spanish as well and are free of charge to GCSAA members. This is a great member benefit for you, your crew and facility!

In other news, GCSAA just released its newly-redesigned website at www.gcsaa.org. The latest version is cleaner, easier to navigate, and more responsive on mobile devices. There are also more opportunities to view news and information about key programs on the homepage. Content is divided into five main focus areas:

- **WHO WE ARE:** Who We Are focuses on information about the association, membership and resources for media.
- **WHAT WE DO:** What We Do looks at GCSAA's role in the golf industry and wider world through programs like advocacy and the GCSAA Foundation.

- **FACILITY:** Facility offers the resources to help GCSAA members and their facilities thrive with information on the environment and best management practices, access to the Turfgrass Information File and calculators to help with a variety of projects on the course.
- **CAREER:** Career focuses on the professional development opportunities to help you advance and the workforce development tools to help you build and retain your staff.
- **COMMUNITY:** Community is the place to find connections at the chapter and regional levels, and the popular forums and membership directory.

In addition to the new look and navigation, gcsaa.org now features translation capabilities in Spanish, French and Italian. The site is also enhanced with an optimized AI search to help you find the resources you are looking for on gcsaa.org and beyond.

The site will continue to have further enhancements in the coming months and we hope you enjoy the latest features.

As always, please reach out to me with any questions or assistance you may need at jjensen@gcsaa.org. You can also follow me on X for industry updates at GCSAA_SW and my regional blog and calendar of events is available at <https://www.gcsaa.org/resources/regional-resources/southwest>. Thank you for your support!

Jeff Jensen

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From the Capitol

By **CRAIG KESSLER**, *California Alliance for Golf (CAG)*

ckessler@scga.org / www.calgolf.org



This is the first of what GCSANC envisages as a recurring column about all the places where golf and public policy intersect in California. There are a lot of places, to be sure, not all of which deal with legislation and regulation, and not all of which emanate from Sacramento, despite the title of this column. Some, like water, land use, and environmental stewardship, are more often dealt with at other levels of government. Nongovernmental and quasi-governmental institutions as well – e.g., cities, counties, public utilities, special districts, water retailers, water wholesalers, and media.

I know some of you from the 14 years I spent as Director of Governmental/Public Affairs for the Southern California Golf Association (SCGA). While much of my work there dealt with issues and governments local and regional to the 10 counties that the SCGA served, some of it necessarily involved statewide issues. As much as some in the northern part of the state might like it to be otherwise, Southern California is in California, and the laws and regulations adopted in Sacramento affect southerners just the same as northerners. And, truth be known, and I am told that members of the GCSANC have long known this “truth,” because the SCGA was the only California golf organization with full-time government affairs staffers, those staffers served as the de facto staff of the California Alliance for Golf (CAG).

So, when I stepped down a year ago as Director of SCGA’s governmental affairs operation, the golf leadership organizations that came together years ago to create the California Alliance for Golf

determined to up their respective antes and fund a part-time CAG directorship. And please know that ALL of those organizations, including all of those in Northern California (Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California, Sierra Nevada Golf Course Superintendents Association, Northern California Golf Association, Northern California PGA, and California Golf Course Owners Association), are contributors. With the SCGA continuing to lend the services of its public affairs and other departments to assist the beefed-up operation, the California golf community is better positioned today to handle whatever Sacramento throws its way than it was one year ago. And, in case you hadn’t noticed, it’s been throwing more our way in recent years.

It’s called the CALIFORNIA Alliance for Golf, not the Southern California Alliance for Golf. I may be a southerner, but my duties as CAG’s first Executive Director, albeit on a part-time basis, are as much northern duties as they are southern duties. So, in addition to introducing this recurring column and my new role in the California golf community, please let this column also stand as my pledge to you that I am as available to you and your needs as I am to those in Southern California, with whom I have been working closely for years. You can reach me at ckessler@scga.org.

Craig Kessler

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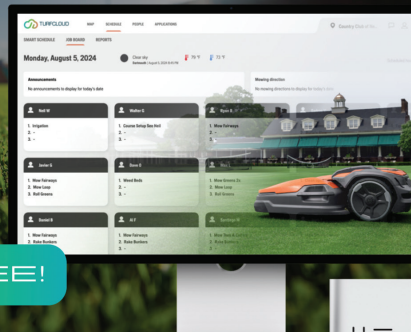
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Superintendent Profiles:

Q&A

GCSANC proudly recognizes The Olympic Club, Cypress Point Club, and Monterey Peninsula Country Club, hosts of national-level championships occurring this summer and fall. We recently caught up with the superintendents to gain their perspectives as they prepare for these high-profile events.



Q&A

Conner Galea

Superintendent, Monterey Peninsula Country Club

How long have you been in your current position and in the industry?

I have been the Superintendent at Monterey Peninsula Country Club for nine months. My experience in the industry goes back to high school (13 years), but I would regularly go to work with my dad, Peter Galea, and help the crew during summer breaks and before school as well as a young kid.

How long have you worked for your current club?

4+ years.

What are your favorite features of the course selected for the championship? The Dunes Course underwent a renovation in 2015 by Jackson-Khan Design, which incorporated natural sand dunes to seamlessly blend with the surrounding coastal landscape.

What is your favorite golf course to play, and why? I really enjoy playing links-style courses. I've been fortunate to travel overseas a few times, where I saw some amazing golf course architecture.

What is/are the course(s) you most admire or appreciate from the perspective of a superintendent who understands course conditions and what is required to maintain a course? As a superintendent, I really admire courses that are maintained to play fast and firm. These conditions not only highlight the architectural intent, but also bring out the character of the course. They challenge players to think strategically and require a high level of precision in their game. From a maintenance perspective, achieving those playing conditions consistently takes a great deal of planning, attention to detail, and collaboration across the entire team, which I greatly respect and appreciate.

*Monterey Peninsula
Country Club
Pebble Beach, California
Host of the
38th U.S. Women's
Mid-Amateur Championship
October 4-9, 2025*



Continued on page 15

What factors do you believe were instrumental in your club/course being selected for a national championship? Monterey Peninsula Country Club has a proud 100-year history and has hosted several PGA and USGA events. As we celebrate our centennial, the membership is eager to showcase the Dunes Course—our original course—and highlight its unique character and heritage.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for you and your staff in preparation for hosting a national tournament? Effective water management is essential for all golf courses, especially on sand-based properties. With limited water resources, rising costs, and variable local weather, targeted spot watering is critical to maintaining optimal playing conditions while conserving water.

Do you consult any other superintendents in preparation for hosting a national tournament, and, if so, whom? Absolutely. I regularly connect with local superintendents to discuss current challenges and exchange ideas. Chris Dalhamer, our Director of Agronomy, has extensive experience with major events, making these situations second nature to him. He's been very forward-thinking throughout the lead-up to this event, and we're in constant communication as we prepare together.

How does membership in GCSANC assist you in your role as a turfgrass management professional? Attending the meetings by GCSANC has been extremely valuable to my growth. I consistently walk away with new knowledge—whether it's related to chemicals, soils, renovations, or turf cultivar studies, the information shared over the years has been incredibly beneficial. Additionally, these events provide a great opportunity to connect with new people and stay informed about local developments in the industry.

What other resources are essential to support you in your role? Our staff: We are fortunate to have a highly experienced team, including several long-tenured employees. Notably, our mechanic and irrigation technician have each been with us for more than 35 years, bringing invaluable knowledge and consistency to our operation.

Given the responsibilities in hosting a major golf tournament, what do you do to handle the stress? We have spent a lot of time preparing for this event and developing plans. We have a roadmap planned for several months ahead of time and that really helps reduce the stress level. Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, biking, skiing, golfing and travelling.



Q&A

Jeff Markow

Superintendent, Cypress Point Club

How long have you been in your current position and in the industry?

I have been in the Golf Course Management business since 1977, with the past 32 years in my position as Golf Course Superintendent at Cypress Point Club (CPC).

What are your favorite features of your golf course? The wonderful combination of landscapes – forest, dunes and rugged coastline.

What is your favorite golf course to play, and why? Of course, it would be here, CPC. Again, for the variety in the course layout, changing scenery, wildlife, and variable weather.

What is/are the course(s) you most admire or appreciate from the perspective of a superintendent who understands course conditions and what is required to maintain a course? Too many to list as there are a tremendous number of exceptional superintendents that keep their courses in top condition everywhere. The attention to detail and turfgrass quality in all areas of the country is constantly improving.

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Continued from page 15

Jeff Markow

What factors do you believe were instrumental in your club/course being selected for a national championship? CPC last hosted the Walker Cup in 1981 and is a supporter of amateur golf. The opportunity to host the 50th Walker Cup at such a storied venue is a great honor for all of us.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for you and your staff in preparation for hosting a national tournament? With the much smaller size of the event and footprint, we are fortunate that there will be limited disruption and impact on the course. The USGA is a fantastic partner that appreciates the venue and has been very supportive.

Do you consult any other superintendents in preparation for hosting a national tournament, and, if so, whom? With our unique marine climate and Poa annua greens, we have conversations with Chris Dalhamer at Monterey Peninsula Country Club, formerly at Pebble Beach for multiple U.S. Opens; Pete Bachman, currently at Pebble Beach, scheduled to host the 2027 U.S. Open; Troy Flanagan at The Olympic Club, who has hosted U.S. Opens and has the U.S. Amateur championship a couple weeks prior to the Walker Cup; and a great visit with Mike McCormick at Oakmont this June – the epitome of U.S. Open preparations.

How does membership in GCSANC assist you in your role as a turfgrass management professional? I believe that in all the state associations, the support is always there, anything that is needed is available. It's a great community of people that are always ready and willing to support these events.

What other resources are essential to support you in your role? USGA Green Section and Darin Bevard and Ben Kimball as Championship Agronomists are always available for support.

Given the responsibilities in hosting a major golf tournament, what do you do to handle the stress? Trust your staff and delegate as much as possible, diligent planning and follow up, get both feet inside the gym, and there's nothing wrong with an ice-cold beer...

*Cypress Point Club
Pebble Beach, California
Host of the 50th Walker Cup
September 6-7, 2025*



Q&A

Troy Flanagan

Superintendent, Olympic Club

How long have you been in your current position and in the industry?

I have been at The Olympic Club for over 11 years. I have been a golf course superintendent since 1998 and in the industry since 1988.

What are your favorite features of the course selected for the championship?

The Lake Course is a demanding challenge, even for today's long hitters. The fairways are often severely sloped, with many holes a dog-leg that does not allow the long hitters to take advantage of their length off the tee. A patient player is often rewarded with the trophy at the end of the Championship.

Continued on page 17

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Troy Flanagan

What is your favorite golf course to play, and why? Cypress Point Club. The course has just the right mixture of landscapes, be it sand dunes, inland forest, and finishing with the most amazing stretch of ocean holes.

What is/are the course(s) you most admire or appreciate from the perspective of a superintendent who understands course conditions, and what is required to maintain a course? All golf course superintendents across the country have their challenges, with some areas of the country having more severe challenges. I have also worked in Minnesota, Delaware, Nevada, and Arizona, and, for me, Las Vegas was the most difficult area I have worked to grow quality turfgrass. The temperature extremes are severe, going from the upper teens in the dead of winter to 115 degrees in the summer. The water was extremely salty and the soils were rock two inches below the surface. I admire those who can persevere in the harshest of climates and those turf professionals earn their money on a daily basis.

What factors do you believe were instrumental in your club/course being selected for a national championship? We have a history of hosting major championships. The golf courses, both the Lake and Ocean used for the U.S. Amateur, can stand up to the world's best men and women. Also, very important, the members of The Olympic Club take great pride and volunteer their time to make the championship player experience one of the best in the country.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for you and your staff in preparation for hosting a national tournament? Our biggest challenge is the volume of member and guest play we receive. We have a very large membership with many members who love to play golf.

Do you consult any other superintendents in preparation for hosting a national tournament, and, if so, whom? This is my third championship, and I feel very comfortable with the process of what we have to do to get the golf courses ready. I definitely have talked to Chris Dalhamer at Monterey Peninsula Country Club over the years, due to his experience at Pebble Beach. The main person we work with is Brian Whitlark, USGA Agronomist. We game plan yearly to make sure we have a strong plan for Championship week.

How does membership in GCSANC assist you in your role as a turfgrass management professional? I enjoy going to monthly meetings and I appreciate their advocacy for the profession in both local and state government policy.

Given the responsibilities in hosting a major golf tournament, what do you do to handle the stress? I try to prepare months in advance so that the weeks leading up to the Championship are not overwhelming. There are so many last-second curveballs being thrown your way; you have to be flexible and accommodating. I have an amazing team of superintendents and assistants and couldn't do this without their strong work ethic and knowledge of the profession.

*The Olympic Club
San Francisco, California
Host of the
125th U.S. Amateur
Golf Championship
August 11-17, 2025*



Championship Points of Interest



As three Northern California courses – Cypress Point Club, Monterey Peninsula Country Club, and The Olympic Club - are gearing up to host national championships in the next few months, here is a bit of background on the championships themselves.



The Walker Cup

The Walker Cup is a golf trophy contested in odd-numbered years by leading male amateur golfers in two teams: the United States, and Great Britain and Ireland. The official name is the Walker Cup Match. It is organized by the R&A and the US Golf Association (USGA). In 1921, the Royal Liverpool Golf Club hosted an unofficial contest which was followed by official annual contests from 1922 through 1924. From 1925, they became biennial, held on even-number years. After World War II, they switched to odd-numbered years. From 2026, it will be held in even-numbered years following the switch of the Eisenhower Trophy to odd-numbered years to avoid that event clashing with the Olympic Games. They are held alternately in the U.S., and Ireland or Britain.

The cup is named after George Herbert Walker, who was president of the USGA in 1920 when the match was initiated. Walker is also the grandfather and namesake of George H.W. Bush and great-grandfather of George W. Bush..

As of 2023, the U.S. lead the Walker Cup series 39 to 9, with one match tied, but the two teams have been more evenly matched since 1989 when the Great Britain and Ireland team ended the U.S. team's eight-match winning run. The 1989 match and the three matches from 2003 to 2007 were all decided by a single point.

For more historical information and details regarding the 50th Walker Cup to be hosted by the Cypress Point Club, visit <https://www.usga.org/championships/2013/history-21474853292.html>.



The U.S. Amateur Championship

The U.S. Amateur Championship is the oldest USGA championship, and it was created in 1895 because of a controversy. In 1894, two clubs -- Newport (R.I.) Golf Club and New York's St. Andrew's Golf Club -- had conducted invitational tournaments to attract the nation's top amateur players.

Both clubs proclaimed their winners as the national champion, while Charles Blair Macdonald, a prominent player and course architect, was the runner-up in both.

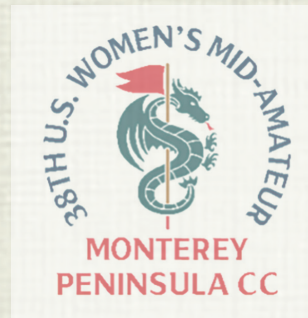
Before the final day of the St. Andrew's tournament, it was announced that an association composed of all the clubs in the U.S. would be formed in the ensuing months. This new national governing body would oversee a universally-recognized championship and create a written set of rules.

With that, representatives from Newport Golf Club, St. Andrew's Golf Club, The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, N.Y., and Chicago Golf Club founded the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) on December 22, 1894, and the inaugural U.S. Amateur Championship was conducted the following year, along with the U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Amateur.

The Amateur and Open Championships were conducted at Newport Golf Club during the same week of October and Macdonald became the first U.S. Amateur champion.

Since the inaugural event, the U.S. Amateur has enjoyed an illustrious history of great champions, including Bob Jones, Phil Mickelson, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods. In 1930, Jones completed his Grand Slam by winning the U.S. Amateur at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Woods, in 1996, became the first to win three consecutive Amateur titles.

For more history as well as details on the 125th U.S. Amateur Championship to be hosted by The Olympic Club, visit <https://championships.usga.org/usamateur/u-s--amateur-champions.html>.



The U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship

The U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship originated in 1987 as a result of a need to provide a national competitive arena for amateurs age 25 and older. By 1987, it had become increasingly difficult for female amateur golfers beyond college to compete equitably with their collegiate counterparts, for whom golf was nearly a full-time vocation.

The inaugural Women's Mid-Amateur attracted 320 entries, only 22 fewer than the number that had entered the 1987 Women's Amateur a few weeks earlier.

Ellen Port and Meghan (Bolger) Stasi each have claimed the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur title four times, while Sarah LeBrun Ingram owns three championships. In 2013, Julia Potter-Bobb became the first female left-handed champion in USGA history, and Lauren Greenleaf surpassed Ingram as the youngest champion in 2015, winning the title 25 days after becoming eligible.

In 2017, the USGA announced that the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur champion would receive an exemption into the following year's U.S. Women's Open Championship. Kelsey Chugg became the first to achieve the feat with her triumph at Champions Golf Club in Houston.

For more history and details regarding the 38th U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur Championship to be hosted by the Monterey Peninsula Country Club, visit <https://championships.usga.org/usbomsmidamateur/u-s--women-s-mid-amateur-champions.html>.

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In addition to \$10,000 in turf scholarships and \$6,000 in legacy scholarships, the 2025 Clifford & Myrtle Wagoner Scholarship & Research Meeting allowed GCSANC to provide \$15,400 in intern housing rental assistance. In the four years that GCSANC's intern housing assistance program has been in place, 29 interns have received nearly \$64,000 in assistance to offset housing expenses.

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Sincerely

h Yun
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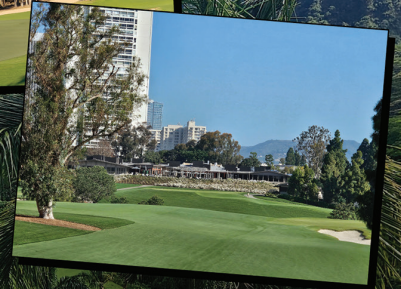


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Naumann's NorCal News

Don Naumann is President of Sierra Pacific Turf Supply, Superintendent of Blackberry Farm Golf Course, and Owner of Canyon Lakes Golf Course and Brewery. Don provides updates on golf course staffing throughout northern California and beyond.



Derick Mara has accepted the Superintendent position at Contra Costa Country Club. He replaces Steven Spatafore who moved to Los Altos Golf and Country Club.

Enjoy the great weather! So far this is the coolest summer in decades in Northern California. The rest of the country hasn't been as lucky.

Don Naumann



Contra Costa Country Club – Pleasant Hill, California

NorCal News

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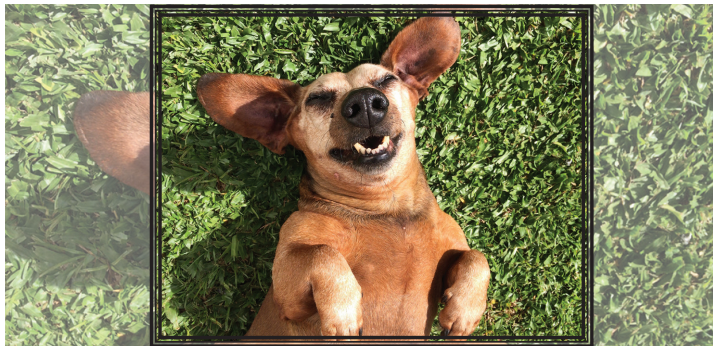


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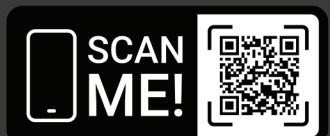
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