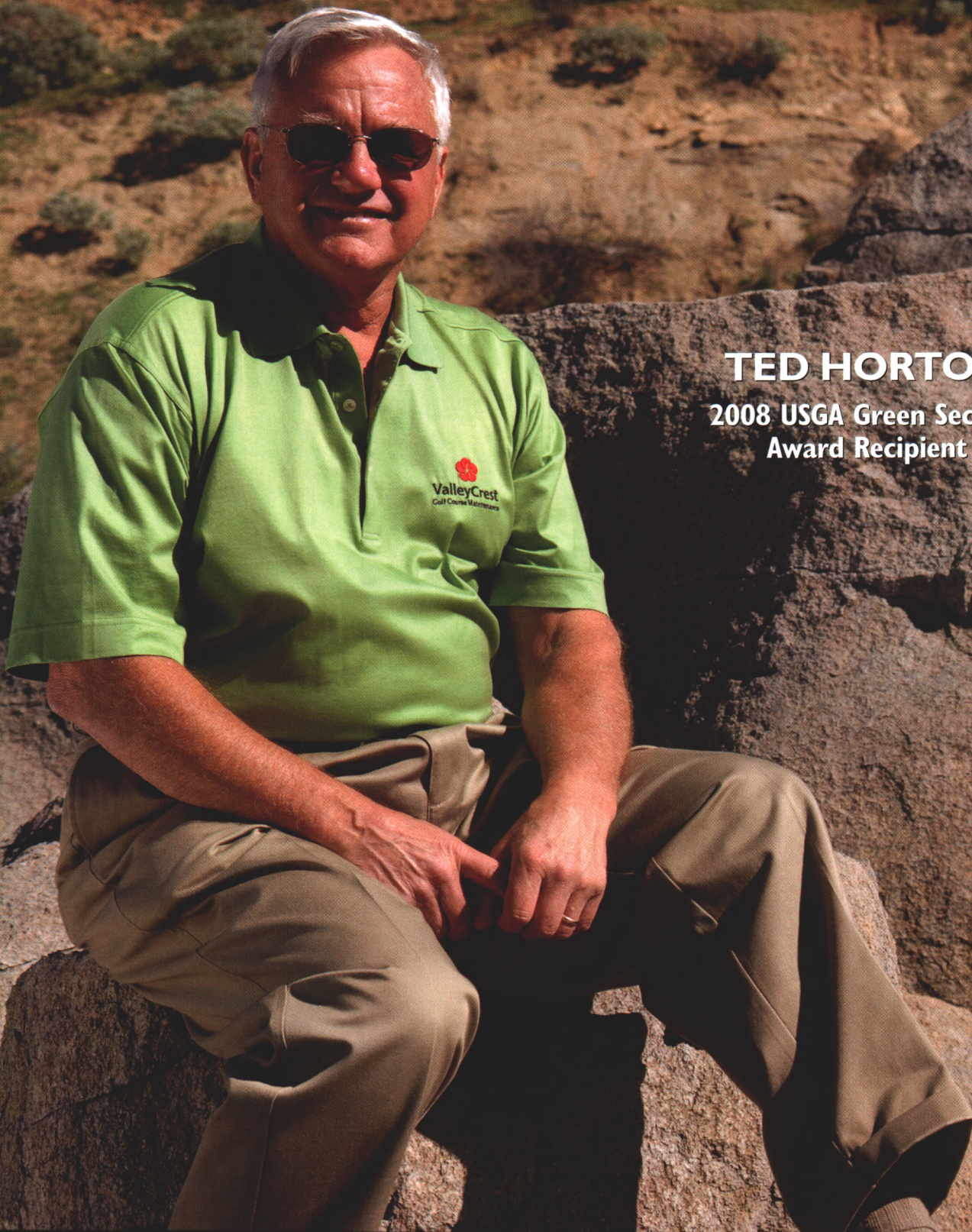


USGA GREEN
SECTION

RECORD

A publication on Turfgrass Management May-June 2008



TED HORTON

**2008 USGA Green Section
Award Recipient**

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Cover Photo

The 2008 USGA Green Section Award was presented to Edward "Ted" Horton for his contributions as a golf course superintendent, an executive in golf course management, and a strong advocate for making golf courses more environmentally friendly.

COVER PHOTO: © USGA/DON LIEBIG

2008 GREEN SECTION EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Taking Care of Business: Opportunities to Enhance Facility and Professional Growth

February 1, 2008 • Orlando, Florida

For the 27th consecutive year the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Industry Show. This year, more than 700 people attended the Green Section's program on Friday, February 1, at the Orange County Convention Center. Darin Bevard, Mid-Atlantic Region senior agronomist, served as moderator for the morning's program of seven speakers who addressed this year's theme, "Taking Care of Business: Opportunities to Enhance Facility and Professional Growth." The articles contained in this issue summarize the presentations.



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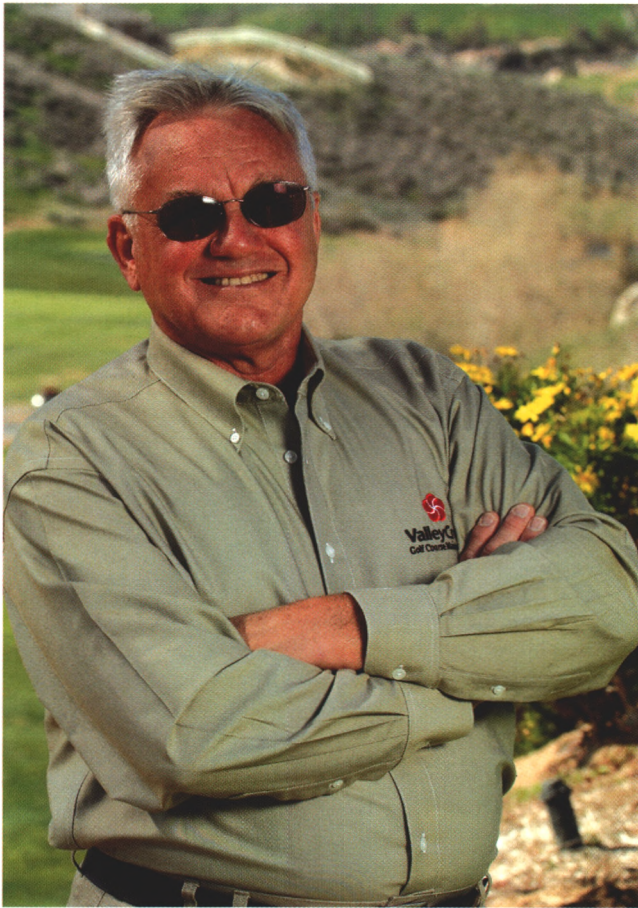
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Edward C. “Ted” Horton

2008 Green Section Award Recipient

Right:
Ted Horton
is known for
his effective
leadership, and
he has been a
strong advocate
for making golf
courses more
environmentally
friendly.

Below:
Ted Horton
(right) and
Iain Struge,
superintendent
at Hidden Valley
G.C. in Norco,
California.



© USGA/DON LIEBIG

Wherever he has gone in his 40-plus years of service to the game of golf, Edward “Ted” Horton has been a leader who has always made a significant mark. If asked to describe him, you would include words such as helpful, productive, determined, thoughtful, practical, welcoming, and a steward of the environment and the game.

Born and schooled in Canada, Ted received a degree in agricultural biology from McGill University in Montreal and went on to obtain a degree in turfgrass science and management from the University of Massachusetts.

As a golf course superintendent, Ted broke on the scene in 1967, taking the reins of the hallowed 36-hole Winged Foot Golf Club beginning at the age of 23 and staying for another 12 years. He was the mastermind of what later was called “The Massacre at Winged Foot” in the aftermath of the 1974 U.S. Open Championship. Slick greens, demanding roughs, and dry conditions produced a winning score of 7 over par and an average round of 76.99 strokes. Interestingly, Horton was the first golf course superintendent in a major event to use out-front rotary mowers to groom the roughs, rather than the traditional “reel blitzers” that tended to lay the grass down. The rotary units made the roughs the thickest and most difficult ever seen, and thereafter all golf courses have used out-front rotary mowers for rough maintenance.

In 1980, Ted moved across town, where he supervised and revitalized the 45-hole Westchester C.C. for 11 years as superintendent. Despite dealing with an outdated irrigation system and other infrastructure problems, Ted instituted a triplex mowing program for the fairways, adjusted cultural practices across the board, and in the process transformed the condition of the course. While there, he hosted 12 PGA Tour stops and many other events.

After leaving Westchester C.C. in 1991, Ted spent two years working as the vice-president of agronomy of a club management company. There he managed budgets and agronomic programs for 13 golf courses from Pennsylvania to Florida; he was involved in the acquisition, reno-

vation, and staffing of three new properties; and he implemented a training course for employees.

Next he went on to serve an eight-year stint as vice-president for resource management for the Pebble Beach Company. Responsibilities included the maintenance of five golf courses; management of all resort vehicles, golf carts, and property servicing equipment; 17-Mile Drive; forestry; ecology; open space and nursery operations; 25 miles of equestrian and walking trails; dunes and seashore restoration; and a multitude of environmental projects. While there, Ted had major responsibilities for the 1999 USGA Men's Amateur Championship and the 2000 U.S. Open Championship. In his 33 years at Winged Foot, Westchester, and Pebble Beach, Ted has supervised course setups for five USGA championships and 28 PGA Tour events.

Since leaving Pebble Beach in 2001, Ted has founded the California Golf Course Owners Association and now serves as its executive director. This role has had a more national impact, too, with biannual meetings that bring together agronomists from many club management companies from around the country. The purpose of the organization is to lead a cooperative effort for all of their agronomists to share information and build customer service. He also has established a consulting company and is involved in conducting seminars for academic institutions and other organizations.

But beyond his official duties, Ted has been an effective leader and negotiator wherever he has gone. In the early 1980s during a severe drought, Ted was instrumental in negotiating with water authorities to limit water use restrictions on golf courses in the New York metropolitan area. While at Westchester he also negotiated with more than 250 union employees. For the good of the game and the turfgrass industry, Ted has sat on dozens of committees having to do with all facets of golf and turf management. For example, he participates in the Environmental Horticultural Science Department Advisory Council at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, the President's Advisory Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resources for the University of California Berkeley, the Agriculture Advisory Council for the University of California Riverside, and the California Alliance for Golf, to name a few.

Ted has been a strong and effective advocate of making golf courses more environmentally

friendly, and he has earned several national and regional awards for his efforts. He sits on many committees having to do with golf and the environment, and he has been a key organizer for several national conferences having to do with water, pesticide use, and wildlife. While at the Pebble Beach properties, Ted guided the Links at Spanish Bay through the process of obtaining certification from the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, the first fully Audubon certified facility in California. Included among his environmental awards are the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's President's Award for Environmental Leadership, *Golf Digest* magazine's Environmental Leader in Golf Award, the California EPA IPM Innovator's Award, and the California Golf Writers' Award for Environmental Leadership.

Despite his many remarkable achievements, there's a lot more about Ted than golf. He has served on many community boards and committees, including service on the Drought Emergency Task Force for Westchester County, New York; vice-president of the Monterey Bay Area Council Executive Board; and the Boy Scouts of America, where he served for 12 years and received the BSA Council's highest award for volunteers, the Silver Beaver Award. He has also made it a point to put his family first. Ted, wife Nancy, and sons Tim and Chris are very close, and although the boys are on their own now, they see each other frequently. Ted and Nancy live in Canyon Lake, California, and, not surprisingly, are immersed in family, church, community . . . and golf.

Ted Horton's achievements are broad in scope and importance, and in our view he is an incredibly deserving recipient of the 2008 USGA Green Section Award.



Steve Smyers, a USGA Executive Committee member, presented Ted Horton with the 2008 USGA Green Section Award at the Golf Industry Show held in Orlando, Florida.

Service with a Smile — from the North (and West) Region

Customer service begins with a well-trained staff, but there are ample opportunities to serve your customers in a variety of positive ways.

BY LARRY GILHULY

The game of golf is played on the golf course, yet when one thinks of the term *customer service* in relation to the game, the image of a golf professional or clubhouse personnel comes to mind. This does not necessarily need to be the case, as those who work on the maintenance crew of the golf course are just as instrumental in providing good service to the customer as those who have one-on-one contact in the pro shop.

For example, can you name the two easiest ways that a golf course maintenance staff member can provide the least expensive and yet effective method of customer service? A smile and the wave of a hand — two simple gestures that are sometimes forgotten. Although a well-trained and interested maintenance staff represents the easiest way that the customer (golfer) can be serviced during a round of golf, there are many other good (and a few bad)

examples viewed over the past 25 years of visits on behalf of the USGA Green Section. Let's look at a few on both sides of this topic.

HAVE A BALL ON US!

Over the past 40 years of working in the golf industry, there are three irrefutable facts that have been observed:

1. Golfers occasionally hit errant golf balls.



Extra mowing patterns in the areas viewed from the clubhouse greatly enhance the “wow” view for the members and their guests at the Broadmoor Golf Club, Seattle, Wash.



The use of Nelson the dog as the ghost writer for the monthly newsletter at Manito Golf & Country Club (Spokane, Wash.) is a great example of providing a unique perspective with a touch of humor.

2. Golfers sometimes lose said errant golf balls.

3. Maintenance personnel find a lot of golf balls, therefore . . .

Have your maintenance staff toss a golf ball to a player if they see the player lose a golf ball. This simple example of customer service really costs nothing to the staff member, but it provides the player with a great and lasting memory of this act of kindness. It also is a great way for your maintenance staff to interact in a positive way at a time when the player may not be in the best of moods. The result reported by numerous golf course superintendents over many years has always been positive with this simple program.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Although a well-trained staff that produces quality results is the foundation of the type of service that is provided to your customers, the exact opposite can occur if they are not paying attention to the golfers on the course! Though seldom seen in travels across the western United States over the past 25 years, an example of what would be considered less than desirable customer service where two staff members

decide to discuss a topic with both maintenance units on the green while a player in the foggy background waits to hit his shot. Even if moving to the side may slow down the job, the player should have the right of way as a fundamental part of good customer service.

PRODUCE A SHOW WITH HOW YOU MOW!

Good customer service can come in many different forms. For example, Sean McDonough, superintendent at the Broadmoor Golf Club in Seattle, Washington, uses his 10th and 18th fairways to create dramatic “wow factor” mowing patterns. Though the remainder of the golf course also is in wonderful condition, McDonough knows how powerful this visual form of customer service affects the members who sit in the clubhouse for lunch, after a round of golf, or when entertaining their guests.

Distinct definition of playing areas through mowing practices is a visual effect that generally is well received by players, and customer service also can be enhanced by how certain golf

course areas are mowed based on the type of grass. For example, during the past several years, seashore paspalum has shown many positive virtues in Hawaii while displaying one major problem — it is “sticky” around greens when it is mowed too high (golf balls do not release toward the hole easily). Robert Mederios, superintendent at the Kiahuna Golf Club, has led the charge of several golf courses that are simply addressing this negative and turning it into a positive with lower mowing heights extended 10–15 yards around the greens to get his surrounds out of a “sticky” situation. This also has had the added advantage of making this grass more competitive against invading weeds, and the cleanliness is exceptional at mowing heights in the 0.250–0.350" range. Finally, golfers now have multiple options on their short shots instead of the previous wedge shot that is seen so commonly on most golf courses.

NELSON — A DOG WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

There is no question that one major portion of customer service is com-



The desired location of bunker rakes is just one of many player etiquette topics discussed in the short DVD produced for the entire membership at Meridian Valley Country Club, Kent, Wash.



An interested maintenance staff looks on as Stephanie Kono wins a 23-hole match at the 2007 U.S. Junior Girls at Tacoma Country & Golf Club, Tacoma, Wash. Great customer service comes from a maintenance staff that is well trained and interested in the playing surface they provide.

munication. Many forms of communication are used around the clubhouse, with one of the most common being the course or club newsletter. Tim Ansett, CGCS, Manito Golf and Country Club (Washington), changed his format of delivering some upcoming golf course news to the membership by asking his border collie (Nelson) to “write” the newsletter. Nelson obliged with one of the most memorable articles ever written by a dog about his many observations in his first few years as the golf course goose dog (http://www.usga.org/turf/regional_updates/regional_reports/northwest/08-30-2007.html). Several months after Nelson’s exposé, this type of innovative and humorous communication was still discussed in a very positive way and offers another effective way to service your customers.

GOLF COURSE ETIQUETTE, MERIDIAN VALLEY STYLE

Meridian Valley Country Club in Kent, Washington, had a dilemma noted at many golf courses with the influx of new players to the game — less than desirable player etiquette and care of the course. Golf Course Superintendent Craig Benson and his Green Committee decided to do something about it. With the help of one of their talented members, they created a low-cost, yet effective DVD that demonstrates the club’s policies in regard to checking in at the pro shop, the practice facility, golf cart driving, pull cart usage, ball mark repair, divot repair, proper use and placement of bunker rakes, and broken tees. What started as a few copies for new members soon turned into a copy for every member. It wasn’t long before this effort made a

major difference at the golf course, as members are now far more cognizant of providing their own service to their fellow members.

There are numerous ways to serve your golfing customers, including some of the previous items and many more. In summary, the maintenance staff inevitably has a great impact on how your golfers may or may not enjoy their experience. Enjoying the outdoors, time with your friends, and hitting that seldom-seen sweet spot are certainly all part of the experience, but sometimes it is a simple smile and a friendly wave of the hand from the superintendent or the staff that is the most appreciated.

LARRY GILHULY is director of the Green Section’s Northwest Region.

How to Win Friends and Influence Enemies!

Customer service in the Northeast Region.

BY DAVID A. OATIS

Customer service means different things to different people. Golfers might equate good service to things like curbside assistance with their golf bags, locker room attendants, or a helpful pro shop staff to assist them. Traditionally, golf course superintendents have probably equated good customer service with providing good playing conditions. However, the golf market has become increasingly competitive, and superintendents today think of all sorts of different ways to improve customer service. Doing the *little things* well in order to make the golfing experience unique and more pleasurable can have a big impact on how a course is perceived. This extra effort ultimately translates to a significant difference in the bottom line of a facility.

Golf's environmental movement has had a tremendous impact on how courses are designed and maintained. Many courses establish naturalized buffer strips around their bodies of water to protect water quality, and many others maintain naturalized areas to provide food, cover, and habitat for wildlife and to add interest, contrast, and strategy to the game. Since many golfers consider themselves environmentalists, naturalizing areas can have a positive effect on the golfer experience.

Paul Scenna, golf course superintendent at Beacon Hall Golf Club in Ontario, Canada, is doing just that. In addition to maintaining many acres of naturalized areas, Paul developed a 16-page natural area field guide that describes some of the unique environmental aspects of the Beacon Hall



This portable bull's-eye adds meaning to the phrase "target golf." A portable target for special events can stir competition and add fun and interest at the practice facility.

property. It details the flora and fauna found on site, and the guide is small enough to easily fit in a golf bag. The purpose of the guide is to educate golfers and increase awareness of and appreciation for the natural and diverse beauty of their property. It provides fun and useful information, and the natural area field guide demonstrates Beacon Hall's commitment to the environment. What is perhaps most important, it can positively affect golfer perception. The uneducated golfer may look at a natural area and perceive it to be weedy or unkempt, whereas the more environmentally educated golfer might actually look for some of the plants detailed in the natural area field guide and would almost assuredly consider the natural areas a positive addition to the golfing

experience. Developing a natural field guide is a great way to educate and influence golfers.

It is important not to discriminate among the various segments of the golfing population, and it is incumbent upon us to make sure that all are welcome at our various facilities. Creating a welcoming and hospitable environment is an important step in ensuring the success of a facility and the growth of the game of golf. Attractive landscaping can improve the aesthetic beauty of a facility, but the key word here is *attractive*. A landscape that is poorly done or unkempt may create an unprofessional, derelict appearance that could be bad for business. Flowers can certainly be a nice touch, but only if they are done well. The message here is, "If it cannot



Golfers frequently are asked to submit surveys designed to assess customer satisfaction. Sometimes this request for opinions is done tongue-in-cheek!

be done well, don't do it." A plain, simple landscape that appears well kept would likely be much better for business compared with a more elaborate landscape that is poorly maintained.

Facilities send all kinds of messages to golfers based on their design, management, and maintenance. Some are intentionally positive, while others may be inadvertent and decidedly negative. Providing prime parking spaces to the key people at your facility is a nice way to say thank you for your volunteer efforts or congratulations on your accomplishments. Just be sure not to discriminate. Providing a prime parking spot for the men's club champion is a nice gesture as long as the ladies' club champion is recognized in the same way.

Al Fierst, superintendent at Oak Park Country Club in Illinois, works closely with the ladies' group at his course to make sure their guest days are something extra special. This year, he procured pink flags and painted tee markers and hole liners pink for the theme of their ladies' guest day, which happened to be "pretty in pink." Obviously, this is not something that can be decided upon or pulled together at the last minute. Al works with the committee several months ahead of

time to ensure effective planning, preparation, and coordination. In addition to making one day extra special, this approach shows a strong commitment to the club's women golfers.

As a golfer, it can be frustrating and difficult to find sprinkler heads with yardage plaques that are overgrown

and/or illegible. To avoid this problem, Al also goes to the trouble of edging around and cleaning his sprinkler heads so they can be found and yardage markers can be read more easily. One could argue that cleaning and edging around the sprinklers could speed up play, and it is a nice way to help golfers have a better day.

On a recent visit to Ridgewood Country Club in Paramus, N.J., superintendent Todd Raisch's staff was observed trimming around the yardage monuments on the tees. In between more aggressive edging, scissors are used to snip away errant blades of grass so that golfers can easily find the yardage plaques. On a visit to The Park Country Club in Buffalo, N.Y., last summer, superintendent Scott Dodson's staff was observed carefully folding the ball washer towels over the top of the ball washers. Scott explained that this is done every morning for two reasons: seeing the towels folded over the top of the ball washers allows Scott to quickly assess whether they have been serviced on a given morning, and it prevents the overfilled ball washer from leaking



Plenty of cooperation and lead time can make it possible to go the extra mile to make special occasions even more special. The theme for this Lady's Guest Day was "Pretty in Pink." Accordingly, Superintendent Al Fierst purchased pink flags and had tee markers and hole liners painted pink.

soapy water onto the towel, thereby creating a mess. These are examples of little things that golfers are more likely to notice if they are not done rather than if they are.

No one goes to greater lengths to accommodate women golfers than Jim Moore, golf course superintendent at Puslinch Lake Golf Course in Ontario, Canada. Recently, Jim mowed out a forward tee in the shape of a heart for a special occasion. He later mowed another forward tee in the form of a ribbon for a breast cancer fund-raising event. While this may not be possible or appropriate at your golf course, it certainly speaks volumes as to Jim's commitment to his clientele.

Just about everyone is guilty of taking the game of golf too seriously at one time or another, and it is important to keep in mind that golf is a game that is intended to be enjoyable. Wayne Lamb, golf course superintendent at Transit Valley Country Club in East Amherst, N.Y., recently rebuilt and expanded his practice facility. With the popularity of practice today, this was a tremendous hit with his golfers. A larger tee with better turf combined with target greens add to the value and enjoyment of the practice experience. However, the finishing touch came at the closing day when a different sort of competition was held at the practice facility. Wayne placed a target out in the range and the golfers held a competition trying to hit it. Initially, the target was an old dump truck placed out in the range with its bed elevated, and the golfers tried to hit the bed. It was so popular that Wayne expanded it the following year by building a large bull's eye that easily fits on the back of a small maintenance vehicle equipped with a dump bed. In this fashion, the target can be placed out in the range with just a few minutes of effort.

Many courses have developed one type of hole location guide or another over the years, and they range from a movable indicator on a flagstick to color-coded flags to indicate front,

middle, or back hole locations. Unfortunately, they all have the same thing in common: they frequently generate golfer arguments since the identification of a hole location tends to be subjective. Golfers who come up short may argue that the guide indicated a front hole location when it was really a middle or back hole location. One superintendent, who asked to remain nameless, was so frustrated with the situation that he actually painted an arrow on the green, telling his golfers, "There is the hole. Play to it!"



The little things mean a lot. Folding the towel over the top of the ball washer in the morning lets the superintendent know that it has been serviced. It also prevents an overfilled ball washer from leaking soapy water onto a clean towel.

Golf course accessories say a lot about a course and its management. Accessories that are color coordinated, clean, and attractive in design add to golfer comfort without detracting from beauty. They convey a message of taste and competency. On the other hand, broken or poorly coordinated accessories (ball washers, benches, and trash receptacles of varied and different color and style) create an unattractive and attention-grabbing appearance. Signs that are old, rusted, and falling down create an air of frugality or neglect. Clearly, these are not messages most superintendents want to send to their golfers.

At the end of the day, the number-one priority in terms of customer service must always be golfer safety. Facility managers must maintain their courses in accordance with all appropriate laws and regulations and with staff and golfer safety in mind. Although it is inevitable that accidents will occur from time to time, some accidents are predictable and many others are preventable. Thus, be sure to inspect your facility regularly with safety in mind. Make sure that cart paths are designed, built, and maintained to be safe for

golfers and maintenance equipment. Inspect the trees on your property and quickly remove unsound trees or branches. Check for sunken irrigation or drain lines and holes made by burrowing animals. Broken valve boxes or missing lids create an obvious and significant hazard. Higher insurance costs and reduced revenue combined with golfer dissatisfaction and bad press are the results of accidents, so be sure to make safety the number-one priority at your course!

DAVE OATIS is director of the USGA Green Section Northeast Region.

Customer Service Southwest Style

Little touches can make a big difference.

BY PATRICK J. GROSS

Communication is an important part of good customer service. David Lowe, at Big Horn Golf Club (Palm Desert, California), likes having a captive audience at the practice range, which gives him an opportunity to speak with golfers and update them on projects and maintenance activities.



No doubt about it, the golf business in the southwestern United States is competitive, and each golf course is looking for opportunities to enhance customer service and attract more golfers. Though not as visible, the maintenance department serves a valuable role in providing good customer service. This article will highlight subtle, yet important, aspects of customer service from the maintenance side, and will focus on three main areas:

- Attitude
- Organization
- Customer-friendly aeration

THE SIGN SAYS IT ALL

The signs used on a golf course reflect the attitude of the organization. What kind of attitude do the signs at your golf course convey? Do your signs yell at golfers to “Keep off the grass!”? Rich Levine, the superintendent at Foxtail Golf Club in Rohnert Park, California, uses signs to convey a positive message. Good examples are the signs that are carefully placed in the newly established native habitat zones. Instead of warning golfers to keep out of these areas, the signs provide valuable information that these areas use less water, fewer chemicals, and enhance habitat for birds and other wildlife. Golfers understand the message and naturally want to comply by keeping their carts out of the area, knowing they are doing something positive for the environment.

PRACTICE RANGE CONVERSATION

If the golf course superintendent communicates well, he can create good customer service and provide important information about maintenance activities. One of the best places to meet and talk with golfers is on the practice range. David Lowe, CGCS, Bighorn Golf Club in Palm Desert, California, finds that it is easier to talk with several people in a central location, such as the practice range, instead of interrupting golfers while they are trying to enjoy their round. It gives golfers an opportunity to ask questions, learn more about what is going on on the golf course, and have a better appreciation of what the maintenance staff is doing to provide the best possible playing conditions.

CLEAN RESTROOMS

The condition and cleanliness of the golf course restrooms are an aspect of maintenance detail and



The staff at Barona Creek Golf Course (Lakeside, California) uses a gang-tackle approach to fairway aeration. Four crew members work together to core aerate, sweep, mow, and blow the fairway so the surface is clean and playable with less impact on golfers.



Outside tournaments are a significant source of revenue for most golf courses. Designating one staff member to work with vendors and developing a pre-tournament checklist can make sure that details are handled to the customers' satisfaction.

The signs used throughout the golf course reflect the attitude of the organization. "Keep off the grass" may not be the message you want to send to golfers if you want to attract customers. Positive messages about native habitat at Foxtail Golf Course (California) project a positive message about course maintenance activities.



good customer service. Many superintendents throughout the Southwest Region mentioned that they pay particular attention to the women's restroom, which has been identified by various forums, such as *Golf 20/20*, as a major complaint of women golfers. Cleaning the restrooms in the morning and checking these areas throughout the day is a customer service detail that is appreciated by all golfers.

PRE-TOURNAMENT CHECKLIST

Outside tournaments and events are a significant source of revenue for most golf courses. Depending on how these events are organized and handled by the golf course staff, they can be either a mess or a success. Cord Ozment, CGCS, at Callippe Preserve Golf Course in Pleasanton, California, has addressed this issue by developing a pre-tournament checklist that is used by golf shop personnel and the maintenance staff to establish setup requirements and clearly define the various job responsibilities that go along with organizing an outside event. The checklist contains information about closest-to-the-hole contests, long-drive contests, and vendor requirements (tents, canopies, electrical requirements, etc.). Furthermore, a maintenance staff member is personally assigned to escort vendors onto the course so that trucks and equipment are kept out of sensitive areas and so the vendors have a personal contact to answer any specific questions. The ultimate goal is for the tournament organizers and vendors to have a positive experience so they are more inclined to return the next year.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AERATION

It is a fact of life — golfers hate aeration! Although superintendents and the maintenance staff hate this operation as well, they know it is an essential activity to keep the turf healthy and playable throughout the year. To minimize the mess and disruption caused by fairway aeration, Sandy Clark, CGCS, Barona Creek Golf Course in Lakeside, California, has modified his fairway aeration program by impacting only two holes per day. Sandy and his staff use a "gang tackle" approach by staging four staff members on the fairway to be aerated. First, one pass is made along the edge of the fairway with the core aeration machine. Second, the core pulverizer/sweeper follows directly behind the aerator to break up the cores. Third, the fairway mower follows directly behind the sweeper to chop up any remaining debris. Fourth, a blower is used to do a final cleanup of the fairway surface. Although this operation takes a few extra days to complete, there is less impact to golfers and far fewer complaints.

These are but a few ideas regarding customer service from superintendents throughout the Southwest Region. Although subtle, each example is a way for the maintenance department to have a positive impact on customer service. Ultimately, good customer service is good for business and helps keep each course viable and competitive.

PAT GROSS is the director of the Southwest Region of the USGA Green Section. He joined the staff in 1991 and covers the states of California, Arizona, and Nevada, and portions of Mexico.

Golf: The Bridge Between Generations and Gender

As population demographics shift, we must make an extra effort to introduce a new generation to the game. **BY PATRICK A. SHEA**

The United States has a population of more than 300 million. As a society we find ourselves divided, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, into many different categories. Speaking demographically, we are an aging population in which the respective age groups as a percentage of the whole population are increasing in the older age categories and decreasing proportionally in the younger categories.

For golf, this change in demographics is an opportunity if one assumes the aging categories will have more free time with a corresponding interest in activities like golf.

The World Golf Foundation has done repeated studies that show regular and frequent golfers are individuals who were taught the game in their youth by a parent, grandparent, or a friend. With the onslaught of the baby boomers entering the age of social security, the relative/friend category must be used to bring new, younger, and older golfers into the golf tradition.

BREAK DOWN AGE BARRIERS

The sad fact is we live in a chronologically segregated culture. Think about it — in your own day, how often do you have a chance to have a meaningful and sustained interaction with someone outside of your family who is ten years older or ten years younger than you are? Frankly, superintendents and golf professionals, because of their employment force or their students, have a greater chance to have cross-generational interaction in a meaningful manner than almost anyone else.



© USGA/JOHN MUMMERT

Besides chronological segregation, we tend to separate ourselves into racial, ethnic, and religious groupings. The projected U.S. population by race shows the respective changes from the year 2000 to 2050 in five sets of categories: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, or other races (Figure 1). You will see that the relationship based on popu-

lation changes dramatically over time, with the minority population having the greatest changes in percentages.

From a marketing perspective, both the race categorization and other demographic information show a separation by age differential, thus producing a dramatic change in the aging population (Figure 2). By dramatic, I

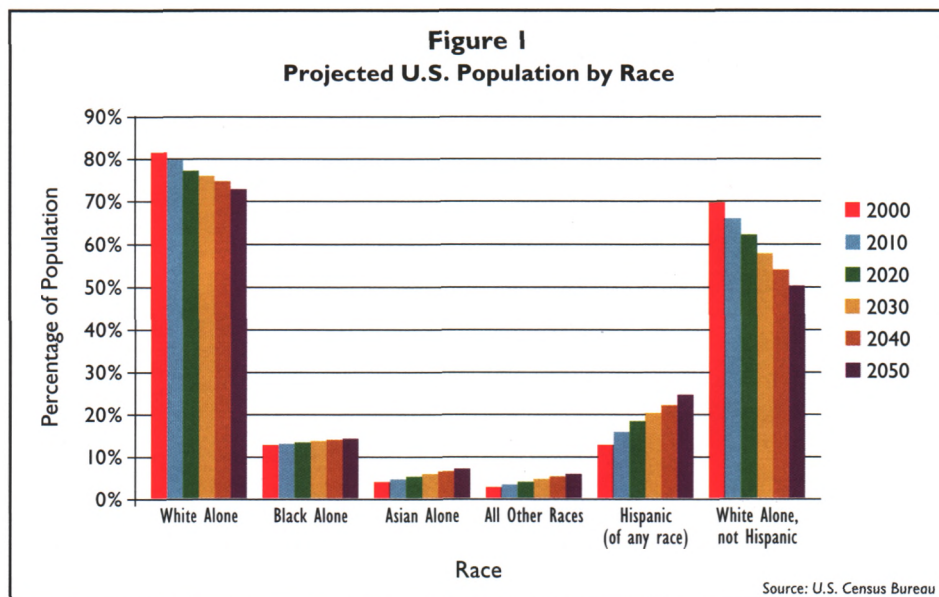
am talking about the difference, for instance, between two or three percent, representing a minimum of 1 million and a possible maximum of 6 million individuals shift, based on the present population of 300 million. My point with these charts is to suggest that there are significant marketing opportunities outside the traditional country club set. If one looks at the population by gender, in all human populations there are always 1 to 1.5% more females than males, a significant difference that needs to be addressed by golf marketing to maintain a consistent level of participation.

In 2003 the National Golf Foundation developed a chart showing the total population (the red column, Figure 3), percentage of African Americans (the blue column), Asian Americans (the light blue column), and Hispanic Americans (the green column). The age category of 18-29 shows a significant increase in the Hispanic population that should, over time, translate into greater Hispanic participation if invited into the great game of golf.

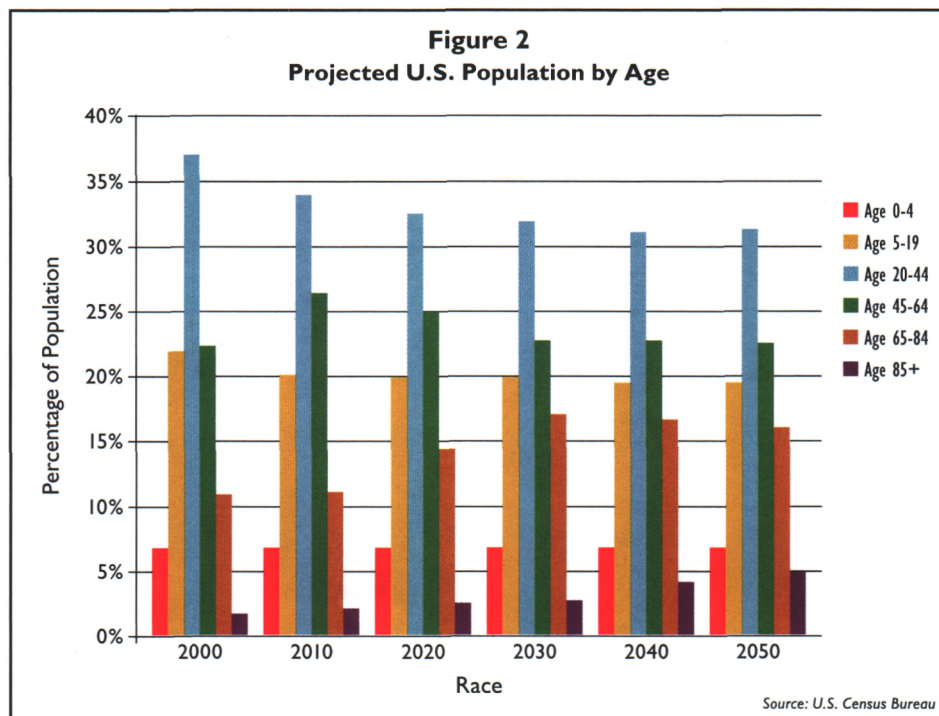
In the same study, Figure 4 shows U.S. golf participation by gender and race. You will note that of the minority golfers, the male Hispanics are ahead, and yet female African American golfers are ahead. Each of these categories should be a focus of both public and private promotion of golf.

RETENTION

We know the numbers: each year approximately 3.5 million people take up golf, and 3.2 million people leave golf. The net gain of 300,000 is less than 1 to 5%, assuming a golfing population of approximately 36 million. This lack of increase is difficult to follow scientifically, but other economic activity clearly demonstrates the lack of significant growth. That evidence is the number of golf courses, usually public, that are being sold to developers because they are worth more and are better use of the land. Golf course



The percentage of the population represented by minorities will increase over time. Golf marketing strategies need to address and take advantage of demographic changes.



The percentage of individuals aged 65+ will steadily increase through 2050. Fortunately, golf is a game that can be enjoyed throughout a lifetime.

construction, which has expanded over the last 20 years, has come to a screeching halt. It will not be a surprise if a dwindling demand takes golf into negative numbers in the near future.

It is because of this dire prediction that we need to focus our attention, as members of the golf industry, on those segments of our population where growth is possible.

Figure 5 shows the number of female vs. male golfers, beginning at age 18 through 70. The disparity between male and female participation indicates great potential for growth of the game if aggressive marketing is focused toward the female player.

Men and women golfers tend to come from affluent economic categories. They have the money to spend on golf. The same is true for educational achievement levels, where the vast majority of golfers have some college, a college degree, or post-graduate education.

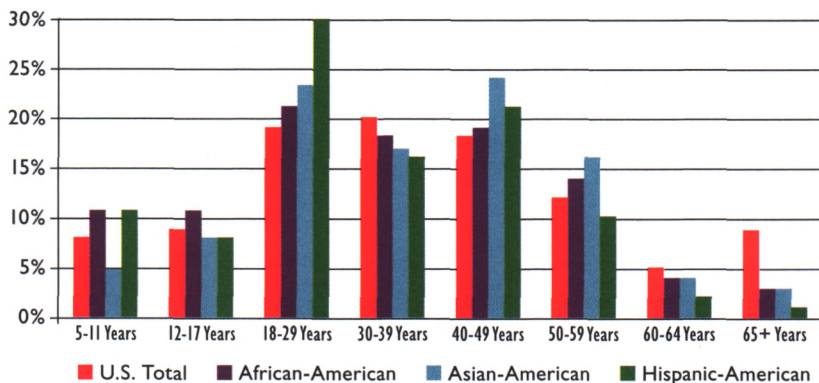
One of the more interesting charts is male vs. female golf participation by occupation (Figure 6). The blue-collar category has a disproportionate ratio of male to female golf participants, whereas the retired/not employed category has a greater equality between male and female players.

So, how do we find the bridge? The first question we need to ask is our own story — when did you start playing golf?

"I got started at 16 and earned money from my first job to buy clubs. I used those clubs for 10 or 11 years. When I went into the Navy I was finally frustrated with them so I sold them." — Jim Clark, Westminster College, Dean of Business School.

Sue Nyhus, the women's head golf coach at Brigham Young University, stated, "High school golf was really important to female golfers' early development." Or as Jennie Underwood put it, "Dad wanted Mom to learn and Mom didn't want to learn alone, so she dragged me along. I really wasn't into

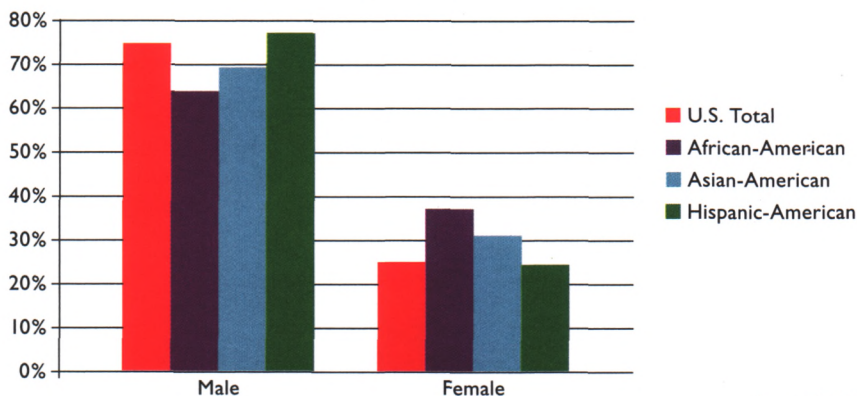
Figure 3
U.S. Golf Participation by Age and Race



Source: NGF, 2003

Developing marketing strategies that target the 18- to 29-year-old Hispanic population would be an effective way to take advantage of projected demographic changes.

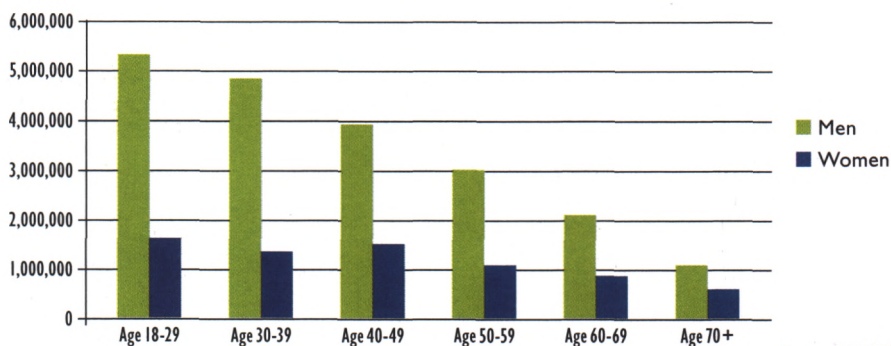
Figure 4
U.S. Golf Participation by Gender and Race



Source: NGF, 2003

Targeting male Hispanics and female African-Americans would be an effective way for golf marketing to maintain and grow the game.

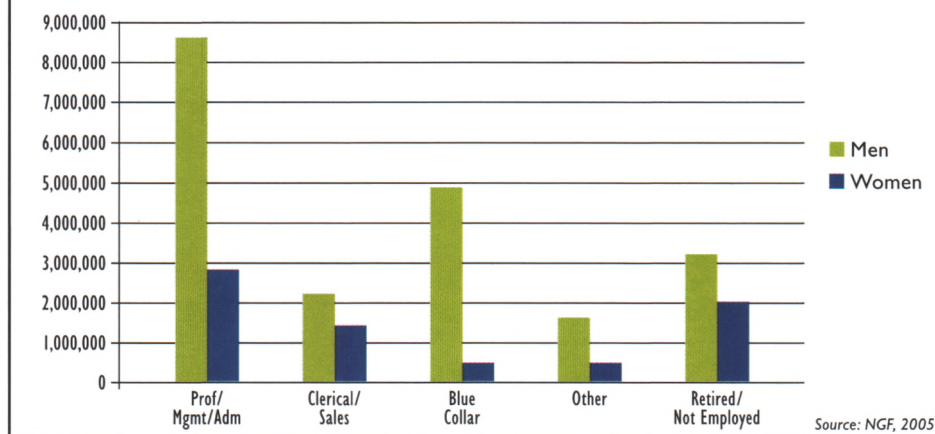
Figure 5
Participation Rate of Female vs. Male Golfers in the U.S. in 2004



Source: NGF, 2005

More men than women play golf regardless of age group, with the greatest disparity found among young players.

Figure 6
Occupation Profile of Female vs. Male Golfers in the U.S. in 2004



The ratio of male to female golfers is nearly the same for retired/non-employed players, while considerably more blue-collar men than women play golf.

it until I got into high school, which is when I fell in love with the game.”

If you pause for a moment and think about your own story or the story of your friends, spouse, or relative, first experiences with golf usually began with a family member, a close friend, or some type of school program. The

real question for members of the golf industry in 2008 is, how can we enhance or expand the number of starting points for the game of golf?

Another fundamental question is why fewer women play golf. Again, Sue Nyhus at Brigham Young University suggests that in the coeducational

format that high school girls confront, the girls simply are out-competed by the boys. There needs to be care to make sure that starting female golfers, both at an early age or at retirement age, are not embarrassed by their first participation.

As Denise Larson, the head women’s golf coach at Utah Valley State College, states, “The number of female golf models is not large and needs to be expanded to bring new young women golfers into the game.”

So how do we get seventh and eighth graders’ reactions? We ask them, “Have you ever played golf?” and “What do you think of golf?”

“I haven’t played . . . Golf is really complicated. It seems too hard to play.” — Karly, age 13.

“No . . . I never want to learn how to play. I don’t have the patience.” — Sam, age 13.

“Yeah . . . I like the way that there are so many boundaries. It makes me feel contained.” — Luke, age 14.



The most effective way to attract a new generation of players is to introduce boys and girls to golf when they are young. Even if they decide not to pursue golf during high school and college, an early, positive experience may help them return to the game later in life.

"Yeah . . . I think people will forget about this sport." — Charlie, age 12.

"Nope . . . I think that it's a dead sport." — Mary, age 12.

And given the ever-present computer screen or iPod, when Hallie, age 13, comments, "No . . . I think it will become really popular later in the future," it represents a present reality that the golf industry has to deal with. On average, every child below the age of 16 spends *on average* 47 hours a week in front of some type of screen. The same child spends less than a half hour in unstructured outdoor activity.

These facts and comments from teenagers touch upon why many younger people are not taking up the game of golf. But imagine if these individuals, their parents, grandparents, or extended family saw golf as an opportunity not just for physical exercise but for family interaction and how their attitude might be properly directed.

A few of you reading this article will think of some argument you have had or observed between spouses, children and their parents, or grandparents and their grandchildren. Yes, I recognize disputes can and do break out. For instance, I taught skiing for three years in high school. I started wanting to teach girls my own age (15 at the time), but within a few weeks I moved to teaching the youngest class of 3- to 6-year-olds. Some of my most difficult student teaching involved students who had been taught by their parents or relatives. My lesson from those three years is: do not try to teach your own children or your spouse how to ski, and I would extend the teaching prohibition to golf as well.

To conclude the story about ski instruction, my wife insisted I teach my boys how to ski rather than putting them in a ski school. After my lessons, it took each of my sons several years to discover the true joy of skiing. Don't let your clientele make the same mistake with golf.

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There are many reasons why the growth of the game has leveled off during the past several years, causing concern about the state of the game. Maintaining a healthy level of play at golf courses will require facilities to think “outside the box” when developing marketing strategies to attract new players and maintain current clientele.

Back to focusing on recruiting new golfers, particularly women. We asked various members of the golf industry how they would recruit women to play. Randal McCracken, head golf coach for the University of Utah, made a good observation when he stated, “To get more golfers, you have to go for men, women, and children at the same time and make it a family thing.”

Think how you would recruit not just female golfers but the demographic racial and ethnic opportunities in the earlier graphs. Is there something about your golf course that would provide an unusual welcome mat to the family (conventional or unconventional) who wants to learn the game of golf at your course?

Finally, let’s look at an all-important component that distinguishes golf from almost any other sporting activity. That is, the rules or ethics by which we play the game. As a parent, I am always concerned about the ethical

standards my sons have learned from my wife and me. Many of the most valuable ethical lessons have been in what some teachers call “teaching moments.” These moments, more often than not, arise in unusual circumstances, where parent and child momentarily recognize the fleetingness of time and circumstances and take a snapshot that is shared in their respective mind’s eye.

The first time my son had an eagle, the several times he has sunk a long putt, or the increasing times he out-drives me — these are teachable moments. My growing up years were spent caddieing, and each of us knows that by watching different behaviors on the golf course, one can tell a great deal about the character, or lack thereof, of individual golfers. The moving of a ball on the fairway for a better lie, the nudging of a ball out of the rough, or the change of a marker to a closer location to the hole — all represent improper approaches to the game of

golf. The golfer who practices these habits rapidly finds himself either playing by himself or with similar cheating company.

One day, my son Michael and I went to play at our local public course. The PGA professional put us with another twosome. The other two golfers were gang members, as witnessed by their dress, tattoos, and language use (I was a legal advisor to the Metro Gang Unit for four years). As we approached the first tee, I thought to myself, “Oh great, this is going to be a long nine holes.” On the second hole, a long par 5, Michael sliced his ball into the rough, and in rapid succession one of our playing partners sliced his ball in the same area. As golfers everywhere, we all began to search for the lost balls. We found them. By the fourth hole we were talking and joking about our respective shots and putts. By the end of the round we had lunch together.

From my experience, there really is no other place besides a golf course

where people of different races, ethnic groups, genders, or other categories one can think of, can join together in a shared game with a common set of rules monitored by each individual. It is because of this heritage that I, like many others, want to highlight the First Tee program and its nine core values. They represent an ethical constellation that, if learned, will allow both the student and the teacher to be ethical and succeed at their various endeavors.

THE FIRST TEE NINE CORE VALUES

Source:

www.thefirsttee.org

1. Honesty
2. Integrity
3. Sportsmanship
4. Respect
5. Confidence
6. Responsibility
7. Perseverance
8. Courtesy
9. Judgment

CONCLUSION

With these ethical values, I want to conclude with a suggested to-do list. I don't know about your growing-up years, but in our household we always had a to-do list. It was helpful in planning for the week, although as a youth I thought it was simply a way of not letting me do what I wanted. This to-do list includes ten suggestions on how you might encourage potential golfers, young and old alike, to take up the game and keep playing. None of these are new, and most of them require follow-up and personality to make them succeed. But I do guarantee that if you explore and use them, golf will grow at your course.

TEN POINTS TO BUILD YOUR BRIDGE

1. Identify places in your community where families (traditional and non-

traditional) go as a family. This could include a zoo, a park, a recreation center, or other places you may have visited with your own family. See if their welcoming presence could be used in some way to attract potential golfers. Have a high school with a biology class near you or a local wildlife specialist do an inventory of the flora and fauna found on your golf course, with a list to be handed out to parents and grandparents as part of

6. Have golf events with pizza or barbeque when families are invited to your course to eat, socialize, and participate in a few contests, i.e., chipping, putting, and driving. Parents can compete against children, or children can compete against grandparents. Or nieces and nephews can compete against uncles or aunts.

7. Invite local and regional notables to your course to host a golf gathering, perhaps with pizza, barbeque, or some

other activity to show that notable people in your community are golfers.

8. Invite your local golf association, men and women, to host returning veterans, at no cost, to learn the game of golf and to host a round of golf with the veterans when their schedule allows.

9. Invite local business groups,

like the Rotary or Kiwanis Club, to conduct golf and business development events, including time-limited tournaments to be held at your course.

10. Invite local church leaders to hold youth or senior events in their congregation, ward, or parish at your course.

P.S.: Have a region-wide contest with a significant prize to be awarded to the one or two suggestions that attract the most new golfers to your course.

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their family introduction to the game of golf.

2. Work with your local law enforcement, fire department, and public education professionals to see how a cooperative effort, focusing on the tradition of golf, could be introduced to new players.

3. Identify senior citizen recreation centers where a golf program or a golf league could be established.

4. Visit golf retailers in your region and see how your course could be integrated into their marketing plan for retail sales and customer activities.

5. Start a grandparent/grandchild (parent/child, uncle/aunt/nephew/niece) golf time when the pace is slower and when your course would have golf personnel to assist the adults in teaching the children a lifelong tradition.

Cultivating Success in Your Club

Growing a new strategy for club operations.

BY BARBARA JODOIN

“Most people don’t take the time to think. I made an international reputation for myself by deciding to think twice a week.” — *Writer and thinker George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)*

“Problems cannot be solved by thinking within the framework in which they were created.”

Everyone is familiar with the typical structure of club management in the golf business. The governing body, a board of directors, usually resides at the top of an organizational chart, with the next layer highlighting the general manager/chief operating officer position and down to the mid-management staff and so on down to line-level staff. We have all become so accepting of this concept that most companies include this reference in their governing documents. *Why does*

this simple structure set the tone for club-wide failure?

If you consider the flow of this organization, it is from the top down, and the bottom layer is made up of line-level staff. Even though we understand that these are the people who serve our customers and *are* the most valuable resource we have, why are they represented at the lowest level? Is this how we really see them? Is this how they see themselves? Why is this how we run our companies, our clubs, and, typically, our lives? Do we feel better that *we* are not on the bottom? Is this the measure of *our* success? How often are we told that the measure of success is to “move up the ladder”? My question as I climb . . . who is holding the ladder in case I fall?

This kind of organization also has the general manager reporting to the board of directors. This may seem

logical at first; after all, the general manager is hired and supervised by the board. However, in a member-owned club, the board is made up of part-time volunteers from non-golfing businesses. Have they really hired a general manager who takes direction only from the board, or is the general manager providing the board with the information and leadership necessary to maintain a successful club? Who is leading — the board or the general manager? Finally, where are the members and the club in his hierarchy? If they have no place in the organization, what is their role?

CULTIVATING A NEW ORDER

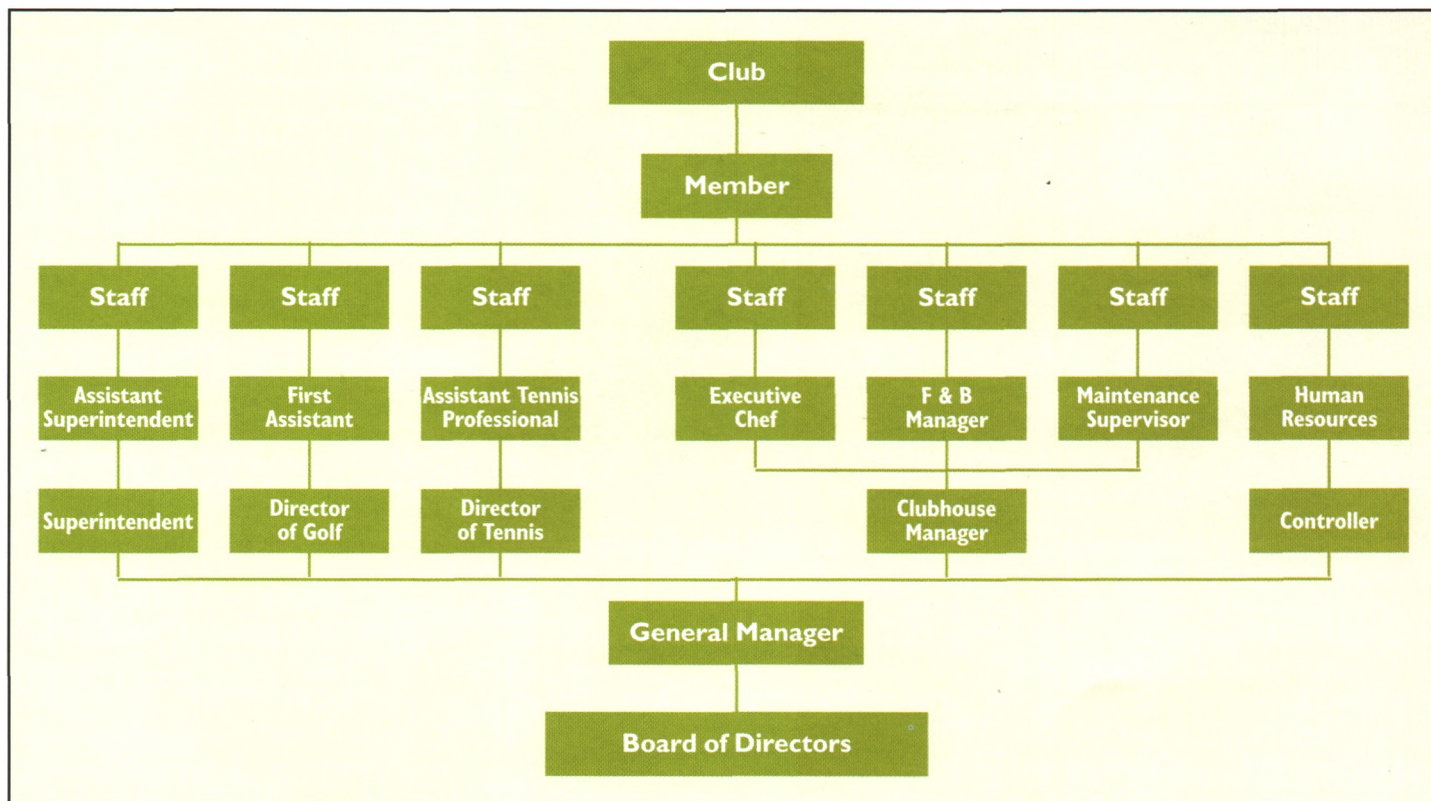
Think of a company as a building. In the standard charts, hourly employees are the foundation. Although hourly employees are critical to the success of the club, they are *not* the foundation of a club’s structure.

A club’s foundation is the governing body, its board of directors (Table 1). They create policy, set goals for the club, establish rules and regulations that govern the activities of their peers, and provide *support and assistance* to the general manager. Why does this begin to set the tone for greater success?

How many times is the general manager of a club faced with a problem or concern that he or she knows will not be well received by the board? Does the general manager go in to the boardroom with confidence and *tell it like it is* to the board members, or does the general manager avoid the issue, dilute the content of the message, or “find a scapegoat” for the problem out of fear of losing his or her job? How do you think it will benefit the club if the board and the general manager can discuss any problem honestly and without reservation? Better communication



New projects and challenges should be candidly explained to the membership by the golf course superintendent and club manager.



How does this organizational chart change the culture of your club instantly? The board of directors is the club's foundation and sets up the attitude for success. The hourly employees are key to this success.

results in better solutions that will set the club in line for greater success.

Now that we have defined a different role for the board, what is the role of the general manager in this new support structure? The general manager's main role is to provide support and assistance to the management staff. Let's repeat that for effect. *The general manager's main role is to provide support and assistance to the management staff!*

For some, this is a new concept. General managers and department heads very often do the same *avoidance dance* that takes place between the general manager and the board. As daunting as it may be at first for the general manager to trust the board with difficult issues, the same rule applies to the management staff. They must trust their general manager enough to discuss all issues in full detail to create solutions together. This is a very simple statement, but it rarely occurs in the real world! When the foundation levels of a club, board, general manager, and department staff

establish this structure of self-governance, honesty, and communication, great things begin to happen. Progress and success are achieved at an accelerated pace.

What about the rest of the organization? Just as it is the focus of the general manager to provide support to the department heads, these individual department managers have an obligation to provide the same support to their assistants and line-level staff. What does this obligation include? First, hire right! Do not add to your staff any person who is not going to be an asset to the rest of the team they work with on a daily basis. There is always a temptation to quickly reach for a replacement when a staff opening occurs, but hiring in haste almost always means regretting your decision.

The line-level staff are the most important people we hire in our organization. As managers, this very simple concept often is far from our minds when a cart attendant or waitperson is hired at our clubs. In the new hierarchy, you

can see that this is the person who has the closest point of contact with the members and provides the support services that keep members coming back to the club every day. In our management discussions, we all know this. However, in practice, it is an afterthought. The right group of hourly staff is the key to service excellence.

The final tiers of our organizational structure are made up of members and club. We all realize that as staff we serve the members in our jobs every day. On the golf course, in the shop, in the restaurants, and across the facilities our continued employment is based on how well we meet the needs and exceed the expectations of members every day.

Now, what is the *member's* responsibility? Most members believe that their responsibilities end with the payment of their dues each month. What else do they owe the club other than money? In the retail business, companies are constantly trying to create brand loyalty. Do we expect this from our



General managers need to discuss the key role that both staff and members play in the long-term success of a club.

members? Isn't this why we sell golf shirts with logos and personalize the club stationery, our business cards, club signage, and every other item that we can in order to put the *brand* on everything possible? So, how do we really instill a sense of loyalty in our members? Good service is not enough. Price will never do the job. Great golf course . . . lots of those!

In order to ensure the long-term success of your club, pride of ownership and a motto of "The Club Before All" must be felt by every member. As every employee and board member serves the club, it also is the responsibility of each individual member to provide that same support. When a member diminishes the reputation of the club by word or deed, the entire organization suffers. *No one member is more important than the club as a whole.*

When a club is facing challenges, it should be expected that all members will stand in support of solutions that protect the club's future. Why do we fear selling renovation projects, discussing dues increases, or capital assessments? If we have truly managed our clubs well and these things are necessary to keep the club viable in the future, go to your members with the expectation that you will have their support. Just like the general manager facing a board with unpleasant news,

the members must be told what is necessary to assist in the success of their club.

Now that a new organizational structure is in place, how do you make it work? First, the role of each person in the structure must be discussed. Sound easy? Think about what that entails. The board is on the bottom of the chart, they must listen with care to the general manager, and the general manager has only one main function: to help his or her staff. This is so atypical of what most of us experience that it is truly a foreign concept!

Start with a board orientation at the next opportunity. Reaffirm that as the governing body, they are truly the foundation of the club. Ask for their support and accept no less. Learn key phrases when presenting difficult issues, i.e., "I know this is not what you may wish to hear, but the facts are . . ."

Next, make it clear to the department managers that they have a dual role in their responsibilities: trusting the general manager to provide what is needed for them to create success and, in return, they must provide support to *their* line-level staff. When someone in this organization is promoted, he or she will move down and carry the weight of those above as a daily responsibility. Take extreme care in the hiring of hourly staff. They are a reflection on

you in every contact they have with members and guests.

Finally, create a culture that instills loyalty to the club. A private club is not much different from a fraternity . . . brotherhood before all! Make it unpopular to bash the club, its staff, or its facilities. So many clubs spend the majority of their time trying to please those who will never be satisfied. Do not let the few diminish the joy in serving so many others.

You are beginning to see that this unassuming organizational chart is fraught with issues that will challenge you in every aspect of your character and professional experience. It is never easy to speak unpopular truths, but speak the truth with confidence. It is not easy to check your ego at the door and realize that the focus of your job is just to provide that which will help others succeed, but work tirelessly for their success.

When new concepts take hold, people will wonder how this all happened *so easily*. **It happens because you make it happen.** The one quote that I can always remember is, "No Change = No Change!" Be the instrument of great change in your club. Believe that cultivating one new idea can truly change everything.



BARBARA JODOIN is general manager/ COO of Pinetree Country Club in Kennesaw, Georgia.

Creating attractive target greens accented with bunkers and approaches mown at fairway height makes a favorable first impression on golfers. This impression sets the tone for their expectations on the course.



Customer Service in the Southeast

It's all about the experience.

BY CHRIS HARTWIGER

With an abundance of golf courses and a population of golfers that is not growing, 2008 is a great time to be a golfer in the Southeast. On the other hand, golf courses continue to be challenged to attract and retain players if their business is to grow. In the Southeast, several strategies are used to try to achieve this growth and player retention. The first is to offer a no-frills, low-cost approach. This strategy relies on reducing course mainte-

nance inside operations costs in order to offer lower or no initiation fees, lower monthly dues, or reduced green fees. Interestingly, another strategy takes a very different approach and attempts to add value to the golfer's experience with the hopes of holding initiation fees, dues, green fees, etc. at current levels or, in the best case, increasing them. For the purposes of this article, this tactic will be called the value-added approach. The remainder of this article will



This portable case of golf supplies maintained by the starter makes a statement to the golfers that the club is committed to providing everything needed for an enjoyable round of golf.

Larger target poles on the range are easier to view with range finders than traditional flagsticks.



describe examples of how managing the golf course can influence customer service and add value to the golf experience.

LET'S BEGIN ON THE PRACTICE RANGE

Clubs seeking to add value to their product understand that the practice tee is where golfers form their first impression of turfgrass conditions and where their expectations for the upcoming golf experience are set. One first idea is the use of larger target poles out in the practice range. Often, the range at lower-budgeted courses is an open field that lacks definition and depth perception. Because many golfers today use the hand-held range finders to determine the distance to a target, the larger target poles are much easier to pick up with a range finder.

Golf courses built in more recent years have gone to great lengths to recreate the golf experience at the practice facility. For example, realistically shaped target greens are common. These are enhanced by creating approaches cut

at fairway height to simulate the view of a putting green on the course.

Another idea on the practice range requires more daily effort on the part of the staff, but it is appreciated by golfers. Each day, the range attendant goes to each individual station and determines the distance to each target on the range. These distances are then posted on a magnetic board on the side of the accompanying bag stand.

MOVING TO THE FIRST TEE

At the Cherokee Town and Country Club in Atlanta, the starter at the first tee has a portable case that contains supplies, including scorecards, hole location sheets, tees, ball mark repair tools, ball markers, pencils, and magic markers. Although golfers may come prepared with some of these items, having these supplies says to the golfer that the club is committed to providing its members and guests with a quality golf experience.

FAIRWAY WOW FACTOR

Much has been written about mowing patterns and how they may impact playing the game of golf. Traditionalists prefer no visible pattern, while others prefer a striped appearance. Although this tip will not resolve this dispute, it can be said with certainty that the visual component is a key factor in the golf experience. Tony Mancuso and his staff at Cherokee Town and Country Club implemented a program to pattern mow or stripe the fairways. To say the program is a success would be an understatement. They have accomplished their objective of creating attractive fairways by mowing in two directions only at a 45-degree angle as seen from the tee, using a growth regulator, committing to keep the mowing units sharp, and mowing three times per week. Numerous golfers have commented that the fairways at Cherokee are the best they have ever been, and they view these fairways as a premium surface.

THE RULE OF GREEN

There is one Rule that is not found in the Rules of Golf, and it is called the "Rule of Green." To golfers, green is good and brown is bad. Golfers from northern states who play on dormant bermudagrass fairways in southern states in the winter often ask, "Why are the fairways dead?" For years, overseeding and its costs and chal-

lenges have been used where winter color is an issue. Today, golf courses are using turf paints to get out of the overseeding game while providing green surfaces. Ultradwarf bermudagrass putting greens are the most common surfaces painted. A few courses in the region have achieved desired results painting tees, and one course successfully painted its fairways. Although painting satisfies the "Rule of Green," numerous agronomic benefits are realized, including lower costs, less water use, simplified weed control, no disruptive establishment and transition periods, and longer growing seasons for the bermudagrass to better withstand stresses such as shade and traffic.

CONCLUSION

The golf environment will continue to be challenging for course owners and operators for the foreseeable future. Every time they play, golfers are making value judgements regarding their time and the cost to play. Hopefully, this article has demonstrated that enhancing the customer experience through the examples included can be good for the business of golf.

CHRIS HARTWIGER is a senior agronomist in the Green Section's Southeast Region.

Turfgrass paint can create an acceptable green color at a fraction of the cost and time compared to overseeding.



Early Cultivation Techniques for Successful Teamwork

Just as with turfgrass, careful preparation helps yield success in club operations.

BY DAVE CHAG



The professional staff at every golf course must work together to provide the leadership that sets the tone for all staff on how to best deliver the desired product and services.

The ultimate goal of any club is to hire professional staff and build a cohesive team that delivers the desired product and services. This requires strong and consistent leadership with proper vision. Every club is different, from public, to one owner, to multi-member-owned facilities. Each provides a different challenge for its superintendent, golf professional, and general manager, yet the goal is for this team to work together in harmony with

owners and staff. These professionals have advanced with different skill sets, backgrounds, and knowledge to come together at last in one environment to succeed. It simply does not just happen, and what we do as a team today will influence member behavior and the development of future professionals.

Our professional working relationships are much like a marriage, where individuals must work hard for positive and rewarding results.

- Professional growth and the desire to be the best at one's trade are imperative. It inspires others to rise equally to any task. And just as important is the interest of each professional to learn another's trade at an adequate level to be supportive.
- The importance of proper and frequent communications cannot be overemphasized, and it must be directed at members, fellow professionals, and all staff in many different forms and

frequencies. These include Web sites and emails, and, of course, there is no substitute for person-to-person communication.

- Teamwork is just that. It is not the individual's success as much as the team. Be humble and give credit to others.
- Respect for one another comes from the heart and mind. Disagreement does not mean disrespect, and defining those moments will strengthen the relationship.

Many of us who have worked in this industry for years understand these basic concepts and what it takes to succeed. Add a few influencing factors to our relationship, like the golfers' expectations from arrival to departure, balancing the busy golf calendar between member events, revenue enhancement, agronomic practices, sharing the constraints of annual budgeting, and, of course, whatever Mother Nature decides to blow our way, and we develop a further appreciation for just how stressful the club environment can be.

Grounds superintendents, golf professionals, and managers currently navigate the politics of new member orientations and new committee or chairman assignments as well as developing training programs for aspiring young professionals. And to that end we have an obligation to cultivate future supportive behavior and receptive attitudes in each of these respective groups. There is a payback for future generations if we focus on a few factors now.

MEMBER CULTIVATION

The club's governance structure ultimately influences the culture and traditions within the membership. Members who aspire to serve on committees or boards have a responsibility to learn of existing programs and established processes before accepting their assignment.

- New committee members need proper orientation and clear definition of their responsibilities. This includes an understanding of existing golf and agronomic programs, club rules and regulations, current communications, and course conditions, to name a few.
- A new committee chairman should meet with the professional team, as a team, to better understand his or her ability to assist the team's efforts.
- Let us not forget that golfers have a responsibility to be aware of more than their impending match or leisurely round and should be knowledgeable of course conditions and current agronomic practices by reading all communications and announcements.

These subjects confronted in advance at new member orientations and new committee assignments, as well as before golf events or casual rounds, will inevitably prevent many future problems and promote a better team environment.

The Rules of Golf devote Section I to etiquette and behavior on the course. It is "The Spirit of the Game" to demonstrate courtesy and sportsmanship at all times. The game is about honesty, integrity, and respect. And these same characteristics apply off the course as well. The existing team of professionals works within this spirit as well as the club structure to be successful, and much depends on member cooperation. A few team examples might include:

- We want to solicit constructive member feedback but discourage improperly delivered criticism.
- We want to avoid comments targeting one professional of the team as the reason for the complaint.
- We want to be proactive with communication to diminish the unrealistic expectation that the golf course conditions will be the same every day.

It is the off-the-course behavior and attitude that contribute greatly toward team success.

INTERN CULTIVATION

Young professionals generally learn their trade with hands-on experience and a positive mentoring relationship. We want these future talents to learn how to work with their fellow professionals as well. A few team examples might include:

- A grounds intern should work in the golf and clubhouse operations. (And this rotation applies to golf and management interns as well.)
- It would benefit interns to attend all three local association meetings. What better insight into our professions than to learn of current issues from our peers?
- Any opportunity for each departmental intern to meet the senior department heads, individually and as a team, and cultivate future opinions and attitudes for working harmoniously together, is extremely worthwhile.

As successful professionals working well together, we might devote more time and resources to cultivating these subtle practices within our membership and staff. It may possibly lead to a more respected and productive future team effort.



DAVE CHAG is general manager at The Country Club in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

ADAM MOELLER JOINS THE GREEN SECTION STAFF AS NORTHEAST REGION AGRONOMIST



The USGA takes pride in announcing the addition of Agronomist Adam Moeller to the Green Section staff in the Northeast Region. Adam will be working directly with Dave Oatis, visiting golf courses in the states of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Adam is a graduate of Purdue University with an M.S. degree from the Department of Agronomy. His graduate research involved evaluating thatch management practices for new bentgrass cultivars grown on sand-based greens.

Adam, a Wisconsin native, received his B.S. degree in horticulture from the University of Wisconsin. He has gained experience working as a summer intern on several golf courses, and he was selected to participate in the USGA Green Section Internship Program in 2007.

Adam brings with him a strong enthusiasm for the Green Section, and he is anxious to share his knowledge with golf courses in the Northeast Region. We welcome Adam to the staff and wish him a long and successful tenure with the Green Section.

GREEN SECTION INTERNSHIPS AWARDED FOR 2008

For the 11th year, the USGA Green Section has awarded internships to outstanding turfgrass management students. During 2008, the Green Section will provide the opportunity for 14 students to travel with the Green Section staff on Turf Advisory Service visits. Each intern will travel for one week with an agronomist in his or her region between the months of May and August. The goal of the internship program is to provide students with a broader view of the golf course industry and the opportunity to learn about golf course maintenance through the perspective of the Green Section agronomists. More information about the internship program can be found on the USGA Green Section Web site at http://www.usga.org/turf/internship/2008_internship.html.

Intern Name	Year	University	Advisor
Jeffrey Atkinson	M.S. Program	Clemson University	Dr. Haibo Liu
Brad DeBels	M.S. Program	University of Wisconsin	Dr. Doug Soldat
Adriana Espinosa	Ph.D. Program	University of Florida	Dr. Jason Dettman-Kruse
Matthew Goddard	Ph.D. Program	Virginia Tech	Dr. Shawn Askew
Greg Groover	Senior	University of Georgia	Dr. Keith Karnok
Chad Kosel	Senior	Oregon State University	Prof. Tom Cook
Dustin Lewis	M.S. Program	University of Tennessee	Dr. John Sorochan
Benjamin McGraw	Ph.D. Program	Rutgers University	Dr. Albrecht Koppenhöfer
Alex Meincken	Senior	Eastern Kentucky University	Prof. Carla Isaacs Hagan
Matthew Naedel	Senior	Penn State	Prof. Jeffrey Borger
Jay Richards	M.S. Program	University of Arkansas	Dr. Doug Karcher
Brian Tencza	Junior	University of Connecticut	Dr. Steven Rackliffe
Cole Thompson	Senior	Kansas State University	Dr. Jack Fry
Neil Young	M.S. Program	University of Florida	Dr. Jason Dettman-Kruse

INFORMATION RESOURCE

The Turf Advisory Service is the heart of the Green Section's activities. Each staff member travels and speaks with superintendents, Green Committee members, and course officials at 100-plus courses each year. Their activities provide a unique perspective, available through no one else in the industry.

Although you may not communicate regularly with your Green Section agronomist throughout the summer, you can take advantage of what he observes in the field. The USGA Web site offers regional updates written by the Green Section agronomists, providing a brief synopsis of activities and problems taking place in each area of the country. Your course may be experiencing a problem that others are dealing with as well. The Web site update may provide some useful information to help you communicate with your golfers. These updates help keep people informed of the latest happenings in the region and provide helpful hints for recovering from unexpected troubles. The site can be found at: http://www.usga.org/turf/regional_updates/regional_updates.html.

NEW PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

The 2007 *Turfgrass and Environmental Research Summary* is now available free of charge through the USGA Order Department (800-336-4446). The research summary provides a one-page synopsis of each research project currently being funded by the USGA's Turfgrass and Environmental Research Program. This publication is appropriate for researchers, university extension personnel, and golf course superintendents who are interested in learning about the latest results from the program. Request publication NS 1646.

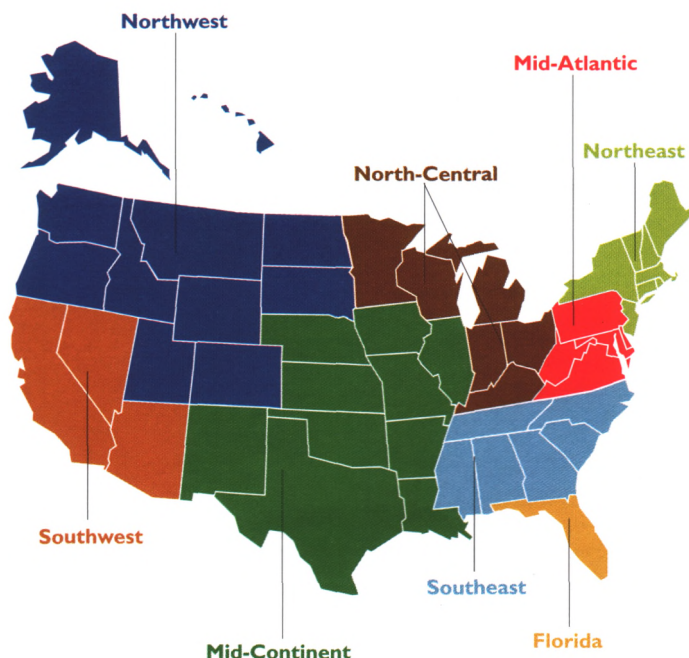


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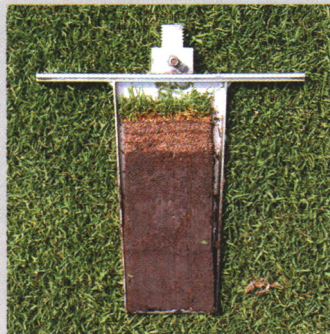
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Turf Twisters

Q: After three years of top-dressing the fairways, we have been able to build up a one-inch layer of sand over the original soil type. The results have been very positive, but including the expense in next year's budget has raised a few eyebrows. How much longer should we

continue the program? (Illinois)

A: Sand topdressing the fairways is a commitment and, unfortunately, abandoning it now would only negate the benefits you have worked so hard to achieve. If this process is stopped, severe



layering will ensue as thatch develops overtop the newly created sand profile. Although it may be possible to slightly reduce the annual topdressing rate to decrease the cost of the program, sand topdressing should not be abandoned.

Q: The putting greens at our course were rebuilt last year and overall everyone is pleased with the results. However, with the combination of a high-sand root-zone mix, a still immature turf, and hosting very heavy play, the edges of the holes literally fall apart or cave in each day. We understand that some courses in our area have used a plastic ring that is set on top of the hole liners to alleviate the prob-



lem until a more stable root-zone condition develops. Are these rings permitted under the Rules of Golf, and may scores made when using these rings be posted for USGA Handicap purposes? (Florida)

A: The rings you mention are liners, and the Rules of Golf treat them the same as the hole liners that hold the flagstick. The Committee in charge of the course is responsible for ensuring that all liners used in the hole are sunk at least one inch below the putting green surface, unless the nature of the soil makes it impracticable to do so — see Definition of "Hole" in the Rules of Golf. Until the rootzone matures

on your new putting greens, placing the rings on top of the hole liner is acceptable because the condition of the soil temporarily makes it impracticable to sink the liner an inch below the surface of the putting green. During the weeks or months that the rings are used to shore up the holes, players must continue to post all of their scores for Handicap purposes.

Q: Our club is very concerned about recent reports of a possible water shortage and how it will affect our golf course. What can we do to prepare for such a situation? (California)

A: Water shortages are likely to be an unfortunate reality for many courses in the southwestern U.S. Planning and preparation should focus on three main areas:

1. Develop a drought contingency plan: Designate which areas of the course receive the highest priority for irrigation applications (e.g., 1. greens, 2. green banks, 3. fairway landing zones, 4. remaining fairway areas, 5. tees, 6. trees and landscape, 7. rough).

2. Establish a formal irrigation best management practice document for the course: This is a formal

document that can be shared with water regulators as well as your golfers regarding the specific practices that are employed to maximize water use efficiency on your property. A step-by-step guide for developing an irrigation BMP by Dr. Bob Carrow, Dr. Ronny Duncan, and Dr. Clint Waltz is available at: <http://commodities.caes.uga.edu/turfgrass/>

georgiaturf/Publicat/BMP/BMP_06.pdf.

3. Maximize irrigation system efficiency: Every effort should be made to monitor the efficiency of your irrigation system and make necessary adjustments, including replacing sprinkler nozzles, repairing leaks, adjusting coverage, and taking advantage of the latest irrigation technology.