

The Idaho Golf Course Superintendents Association

Grass Clippings

New Meeting Location to Enjoy!

What is new for 2023? The Idaho GCSA Spring Meeting and Trade Show! It will feel and look new with both a new location and an offering on different days of the week for our annual event. We look forward to seeing you February 23 & 24, 2023, at the Riverside Hotel, BW Premier Collection, Boise, Idaho. With this new day of the week format, the board meeting will be on Wednesday late afternoon and the event will wrap up with golf Friday afternoon. Registration material will be available in January.

Education is always our priority and we have a conference agenda with speakers and topics to make a difference in 2023. A highlight of the event will definitely be, *"Open Mic with Mike"* offered by Mike Richardson, Ph.D., University of Arkansas. We didn't hear enough from Richardson at the 2021 Expo in Coeur d'Alene and we are fortunate to continue the conversation. Also, on slate is an equipment manager, Cory Phillips, who is joining us for the first time. Phillips has served on GCSAA's Equipment Manager's Task Group and completed Equipment Management Certificate Level 1 in 2017. He teaches seminars and webinars, and has also helped create 5-Minute Fix videos. We may not have had Roch Gaussoin, Ph.D., participate for a while, but we have enjoyed a history with Gaussoin. With his upcoming retirement announced, we were quick to jump on his pre-retirement tour! And adding a little extra class and expertise will be Gary Grigg, CGCS, MG, Agronomist and Past President, GCSAA. Presenting, *"Enhance Your Management Skills."*

Educational opportunities come in many formats — especially on the trade show floor. Allied partners will join us to not only support your association and profession, but to share their extensive knowledge of products and services that can make a difference at your course. Make new contacts, renew and strengthen previous relationships and take advantage of the wisdom in the room.

The Riverside Hotel, BW Premier Collection is a full-service hotel and convention center located along the beautiful Boise River, and is along the Boise River Greenbelt. You will find area options to explore that include a winery, brewery, restaurants and comedy club, all within a half-mile walking distance. Downtown is easily accessible two miles away — an easy Uber ride.

Remember — the days of the week for the meeting in 2023 are Thursday and Friday, with golf Friday afternoon.
(Board meeting is on Wednesday)

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room

Of course we are returning to the Tin Roof for our 2023 Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room in Orlando! This unique venue was certainly a hit during our last Orlando visit — between the eclectic décor, great options for seating and networking, and the great location.

Enjoy the evening with your turf industry peers at our private event at the Tin Roof of Orlando, Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Complimentary food and beverages will be offered thanks to the generosity of our allied partners.

Auction Rounds Needed

Our auction for rounds held in conjunction with the Boise Golf Show makes a huge impact on our annual budget. We depend on high course participation to be successful — and every submission helps. Rounds for four plus carts are preferred. Proceeds from this auction help fund our continuing education and research programs, and keep our user fees from increasing at a rapid rate, as association expenses continue to rise. Please get on board and take action now! We will admit, 2022 was a tough year on our volunteers to get rounds in hand — some of which never materialized even from longtime donors. Everyone is well intended to act, but time slips away, as we all know.

Please mail your rounds plus scorecards at this time. A letter to support your request can be downloaded from the event calendar on the website and given to your facility. Mail your certificates to: Travis Rose, Simplot Turf & Horticulture, 1805 S. Smeed Pkwy Ste 101, Caldwell, ID, 83605-6282.

Newest Board Members

Congratulations to our newest board members elected at the Fall Meeting — Adam Lott, Whitetail Club, McCall, ID; and Paul Venable, Warm Springs Golf Course, Boise, ID. Lott and Venable join Jake Olsen, Desert Canyon Golf Course, American Falls, Idaho. Officers elected: Jason Sigmund, The Valley Club, Hailey, ID; Vice President Brandon Crim, Centennial Golf Course, Nampa, ID; Sec/Treasurer Alex Bliss, Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, ID.

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Boise, Idaho

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Idaho GCSA

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are only a portion of events listed?

Click on the News/Events tab to see a larger list.

We are linked together.

Visit our links page to see what
organizations we proud to link
up with. >

FEB

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Idaho GCSA Spring Meeting & Trade Show

- Feb 23 & 24, 2023

WOW! We are talking a new location and a new
date! See you at the Spring Meeting & Trade Show -
February 23 & 24, 2023. The board meeting will
[...]

ABOUT US

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region to offer

**Welcome New
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Clint Paul

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Sweet picture from 2017.
While Josh Benson hasn't
changed much in five years,
bet his daughter has!



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Info about Idaho GCSA website!

- * Do you have an address change? Changing the information on Your Profile in the Member's Area will automatically update the association's database! Use of proper capitalization and spelling is appreciated.
- * Do you have any classified items? Please be sure to complete the classified section in the Member's Area.
- * Your username is always your email address. To set your password click on forgot password and follow the prompts.

*"The Idaho Golf Course Superintendents Association is
dedicated to helping its members provide the best playing
conditions in an environmentally friendly manner."*



President's Message

Where it all Started

Jason Sigmund, President
The Valley Club, Hailey, Idaho

First and foremost, I want to say, I'm excited to take the next step in my career and serve the Idaho chapter as the next president. I look forward to continuing to work with fellow board members, new members, and Lori.

With this comes my first president message and the search for a topic that's different and interesting.

I always hear people talking about playing famous courses like Cypress Point, Pebble Beach, Oakmont, and Winged Foot. They brag about how fast and tough the greens were or how good their member-guest was, but there is one course in my mind that beats them all. Still, to this day, it has the fastest green and toughest pin placements I've ever played. It doesn't sit on a famous coastline, mountain, or piece of land, but on six acres just on the outskirts of Cleveland, Ohio.

During my early teenage years, my family and I moved from inner-city Cleveland to the outskirts of town. This six-acre piece of land quickly became the home of a nine-hole, par three course. Since my family owned a landscape company, we had the ability to build our own push-up green seeded with Penncross in a centralized area, where we created nine tee boxes throughout the property that all shot to that green. We installed two bunkers with drainage and ran over 600 feet of hose to water the green. Not knowing any better, I had to deal with water issues even back then. Only this time, I would drain the well that the house was tied into causing us not to have water for showers, laundry, etc. Thinking back to those years, I often wonder how I kept the green alive. I remember it being brown and crispy during drought years only watering it one or two times a week. It really showed how far you could actually push turf without killing it.

An old 1960 Jacobson greens mower was our preferred mower of choice; it always seemed to start within two pulls no matter how long it sat. We would take the mower to a local country club

to be sharpened several times a year. Mower height was a guess; at the time we did not have the proper tool for measuring height but eyeballing it seemed to work out just fine. Even though it was an antique, it never broke down, which in itself was a victory.

Holes ranged from 90 yards all the way up to 190, with green speeds reaching 13 on the Stimpmeter. Each tee box had a different angle coming into the green, causing shots over native grass, trees, and even around the house. Yes, the house was hit many times throughout the years. There were multiple times when we tarped the bunkers and filled them up with water to create water hazards.

It was amazing we had our own green, but the tournaments that occurred in that yard were epic. Tournaments started off as fun events that my younger and older brothers would have, but soon escalated to a bitter rivalry. Fist fights, golf clubs being thrown at each other, and wrestling matches in the bunkers were the norm because everyone wanted bragging rights.

As we grew up, the tournaments became more serious; friends and even locals in town started to inquire about playing. It got to the point where we had multiple groups and even tee times. We had three major tournaments a year and different conditions for each tournament. Everyone in town knew when a big tournament was coming up, the yard wasn't mowed for weeks, causing the rough to be six-eight inches, which aggravated my parents and even neighbors, at times. What was crazy about the tournaments, even though it wasn't the longest par three course, no one ever broke par because we always made course conditions so hard. It was more of who could just survive the conditions that would win. My parents were always good sports about turning their backyard into a golf course and even aided us by supplying the food and beverages when the tournaments occurred.

No matter what course I play, there will never be a course like the one I had in the backyard. The memories and basic turf fundamentals that I learned would eventually lead me to turf school and make a career out of it.

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Rock and Roll, Cola Wars, I can't take it anymore...

Bryce Burton, Past President
Star Valley View, Afton, Wyo.

Some of you now have the next line of the Billy Joel song running through your head as you read that line and, or maybe worse, the song will be stuck there play-

ing over and over as you continue your day.

There are a couple of things I learned this year that I'd like to share only as light reading and interesting facts. I seem to enjoy reading about things other than how many reels need new bed knives or similar problems we encounter day to day. So here you go — I hope you enjoy!

The first thing I'll touch on, that almost ruined my life this summer, when I came in contact, was about "Cola." The secret recipe for Coke is hidden in a huge vault in Atlanta. No one seems to know what the ingredients really are. Some say the flavor is based mostly from... raisins and vanilla. I hate raisins! This information challenged my thinking. I'm not sure why someone cares to eat something that is shriveled up and past its "best buy date." Now I struggle to choke down a Coke because I can't stop thinking about my disdain for the rotten grapes. I can't help but think I was an old person drinking their prune juice.

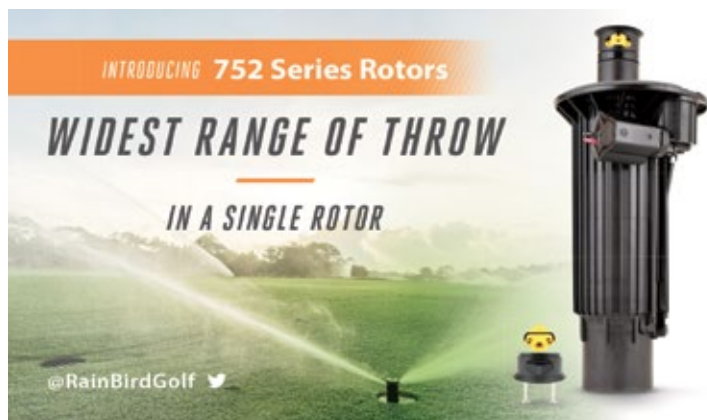
The second thing that I probably should have known, but was news to me, happened to be the term "outlaw." Growing up watching Looney Tunes, I was very familiar with outlaws. Yosemite Sam was very entertaining to watch as a kid. I always assumed an outlaw was just another name for a robber. Not so. An outlaw was an individual who has committed a crime that is punishable by death. In so doing, is outside the protection of the law and could be lawfully shot on site. Therefore the term, "outlaw."

Lastly, the James Webb Telescope was a mind bender for me this summer. If you haven't seen much from it, I hope you will take a couple minutes on the Google machine and look at the images that are being sent back to Earth. In the late nineties, the

Hubble Space Telescope was thrust into space. It started taking pictures shortly thereafter. One of the darkest corners of space was the direction scientists decided to aim the Hubble to see what was out there looming. The image taken is called the Hubble Ultra-Deep Field. Stephen Hawkins explained that to understand how much area the picture contains in relation to the sky, it would be as if you take a square centimeter and hold it up at arm's length to the sky. What the centimeter obstructs is the area of the photo. Now a person needs to imagine how many square centimeters it would take to block the entire view of the sky. With that in mind, the estimates are that the Hubble Telescope can see about 125.6 billion galaxies. The fascinating thing about the James Webb Telescope from this summer is that it has made the Hubble images look like kindergartners have colored them with crayons. And now the centimeter squared has shrunken to the size of a grain of sand with greater detail. Some are saying that we are looking back in time because the images are from hundreds of light years away. It sure can make a person feel small. I wonder if golf exists on one of those other planets in a galaxy far away. Food for thought!

This summer seemed difficult for us at the course in Afton. Issues with the pump station to start off, coupled with what seemed to be a hot and dry weather pattern, had us playing catch up all season. It's a relief to have some snow on the ground and be headed into the off season. Maybe I'll have some free time to research if Coca Cola really is raisin juice.

All this being said, I think it's been a good season for the majority of us, if not all. It was fun to see everyone in Sun Valley this year, both for the Super/Pro Golf Challenge and for then the Fall Meeting. One last thought, I've read that there are an estimated 30,000 golf balls in the air at any given moment among the golf courses and driving ranges around the world. I sure wish I could remember where I have placed my 16mm wrench instead of the lyrics to the song, "We Didn't Start the Fire."



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Have Long-Time Design and Management Traditions Been Working Against us all Along?

Ben Wilmarth, Former Class A Superintendent



A pivotal time in my career finally came when I had to choose to either keep working today's traditional superintendent role, or to take what I have learned and somehow be a part of helping others make better choices for the game. My experiences, successes and failures have confirmed to me that big changes are necessary for the game of economy golf — if it plans to sustain itself much longer. If I didn't love the game so much, I wouldn't waste your time with any of this and I'd be off making far more money doing something that I would probably dislike. Most of this isn't new information, but I do want to keep the conversation going because the average golfer still has no clue. It doesn't matter what type of facility — these issues may apply at any size budget facility, and you may relate at some level.

So, buckle up you poor, unfortunate souls. Here comes some classic, "Ben analogies." And in an attempt to get this info to sink in, cars will be the theme of choice.

As most of you know, I have "burnt plenty of rubber" in the golf industry, mostly around the Idaho block over the last 14 of my 25 years, and I have enjoyed every moment. As much as bouncing around can be hard on your family and checkbook, I have definitely gained a much deeper understanding of how we traditionally operate day-to-day at most levels, but specifically on the economy side of things.

I'm tired of listening to people who put too much weight and blame on why golf has ever failed or is struggling, with reasons like, "New generations are not as interested," or, "Too many

courses were built." Hundreds of golf courses have closed over the last couple of decades. I find it interesting that once they are gone, you rarely hear of what factors led those golf properties to fail. And if you do hear any details, they are sugar-coated excuses to cover up the true shortcomings and collective embarrassment of the individuals directly involved.

Many of us don't put enough thought into how we "do" golf today and how it impacts the next generation. By emotional design and through a long-time cultured tradition, we do it in an extremely costly and inefficient way. With that said, it is clear to me that the majority of our golf properties need a serious overhaul physically, financially, educationally, and most of all, philosophically. For, arguably, a "non-essential" business and activity, it is amazing how flagrant and inefficient we can be with the overall business plan. I think most of us can agree on one thing — we all seek the best playing conditions for as cheap as possible.

Let's first talk about physicality. When will developers and designers have to provide an accurate "cost of doing business" report that matches the property they have rendered before anyone spends a dime?

Still in today's world, once the lots are all sold, the designer
continued page 8

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and the developer leave with fat pockets to enjoy yet another real estate victory with a few drinks on the yacht. Now that this development is complete, are you fortunate enough to have the staffing needed to groom the excessive bunker acreage and maintain the elaborate landscape? How many expensive, diesel-sucking, maintenance-demanding pieces of equipment are required to groom your large turf surface, whereby tradition we feel like we need five or more HOCs like the tour is showing up next weekend? I wonder...what if part of the certification to become a golf course designer was to be part of a bunker fly mow team for three summers, covering 4+ acres of bunker faces? Would the trend of excessive bunker design naturally evolve itself back into one or fewer acres?

Did anyone ask the designer of choice if the maintenance facility that was built to maintain this design — which acts as the beating heart of the daily operation — is sufficient enough to keep that pretty picture in top shape for years to come? Go take a look at the average golf maintenance facility grounds. It's generally an absolute garbage show of old, used, broken equipment and parts. There is often poor (or no) shelter for that expensive equipment. Was this what the maintenance yard area was meant to look like through its lifetime? Is this working environment functionally efficient? Somehow, we have been convinced, or convinced ourselves, this poor existence at the heart of our property is okay and, "just how it is."

The operator, membership, or HOA, is now left with this maintenance pig by design, with little forecast as to what this all means financially. Most people understand that every mile driven in a Ferrari would be a more expensive activity due to the build and the performance. If we don't start evolving and start gearing economy golf accordingly, we may never operate within our means and continue to keep losing them. It's time to take what we have learned and make better choices to level out the existence of the huge swings between success and failures as an industry. If you are smart and not loaded with cash when purchasing a vehicle, other than the ticket price, there are important questions you will ask, such as, "What kind of mileage will I get out of this car?" "How well built and safe is it?" "How often and costly is routine maintenance and can I do it on my own or bring it to just any mechanic?"

Turns out most golf developers and golfers emotionally built "Ferraris" because the money was available from real estate sales. But they won't admit they knew, or have since realized,

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that they shoved a Chevy Malibu motor in it and kept it pinned for the last 20-40 years. We all want to look good and go fast, but most of us can't afford it. Many clubs that suffer financially today have been driving the wrong car all along.

Guess what typically happens over the course of 20-40 years to a property like this? No master plan or capital savings is built. The clubhouse receives an excessive level of attention because those typically in charge don't have the proper training or personal experiences outside the building, where they can truly prioritize the bigger capital expenses and physical needs of the course. The course finally reaches a tipping point, and now everyone responsible for making all of those big decisions through the years is blaming the superintendent for the poor course conditions of today. When will prospective home buyers start asking questions about how much that fancy golf course being constructed around their lot will cost them in HOA dues to maintain it, in that same fresh new fashion, once the developer is finished?

Even if you are fortunate to be part of a well-resourced property where you feel little of this relates to you, I encourage you to wonder what percentage of the current players or members that support your course today, grew to love and enjoy the game because an average low-budget operation was available to them early in their golf careers.

If a cheap green fee wasn't available back in the 80s, I wouldn't be writing this article because my parents could never afford a country club membership. We have to understand how important the cheaper, more relaxed golf properties that we all continued page 10

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CEO

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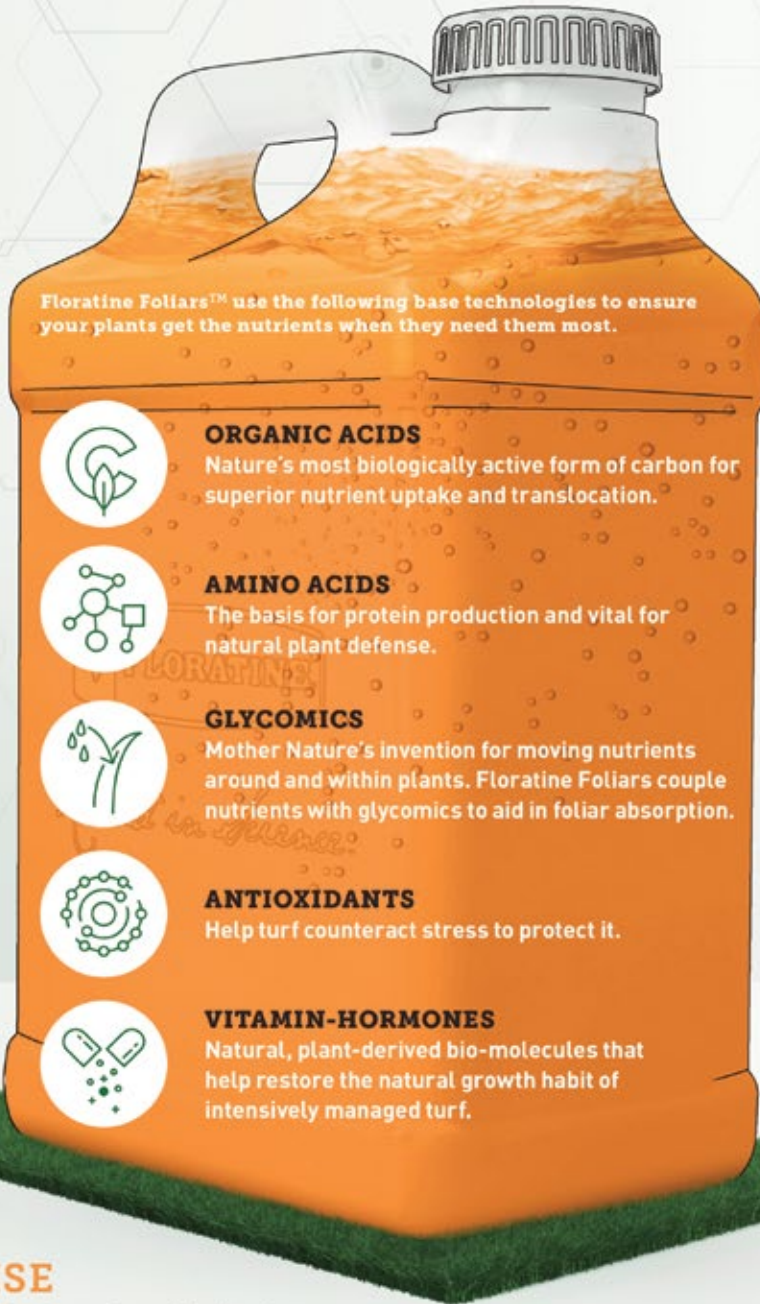
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Long-Time Design continued from page 8

know and love today, positively impact and help sustain the success of the high-end gated properties down the road. Economy golf courses are the breeding grounds of the game and need to be protected for the greater good of the game.

You know we have a problem when the average golfer expects smooth, pure greens, but has never been willing to pay more than ten cents, per hole rate. When will the majority of seasoned golfers be able to better associate cost of a round vs. cost of doing business that sustains the property fairly? And yet, we have really done nothing about it as industry leaders to help educate and re-culture it correctly, as we have learned. You also know by design that this golf business plan has always been consistently poor because asking for loans is extremely tough.

We have to exaggerate in the other direction if we plan to come up with a good balance of results and sound solutions for all of this to work. Imagine building a golf course on a typical average natural grade and terrain, which to be fair, most designers are doing a far better job in today's designs. There will be no bunkers, no extra water features (other than the irrigation pond by default), no artificial landscape or flower beds, and no trees inside the out-of-bounds lines. There will be only two cuts of turf (3/4"-1" playing surface and the greens cut), and you will hit off nice artificial tee mats recessed into the rough grade so amower can pass over them easily. What is the end product of this physical design concept? An extremely low cost of doing business with near-perfect greens every day because our minimal staff is not distracted by the excessive maintenance. We are now constantly focused on the most important surface — the greens. The staff can spend the rest of the day maintaining and tuning the multimillion dollar irrigation system and extending its useful life by several more years. The product of this routine tuning (especially in high drought zones of the west where we are lucky to be irrigating a non-essential activity in the first place) is that playability reaches a whole new level of consistency.

With that exaggerated basic setup by design in mind, the odds of a club failing and not having the ability to generate the daily funds to keep it moving, even in the worst recession, would almost be impossible. So, let's go back to the hundreds of clubs

that have failed over the last few decades. If all of them were built and managed in a similar exaggerated kind of way, how many of them would still be operational today? I bet more than half.

Seems to me this should be a golf design and management model for future city municipal properties supported by the local taxpayers, or any public facility that wants to both provide a consistent product and turn a fair profit.

I keep hearing is that golf, amongst all other sports and games, is statistically the most difficult to succeed at, to a high professional level. With that said, striking a ball correctly for over 98% of the golfing population is tough enough with perfectly flat, hazardless dry conditions. So, we ignorantly and emotionally choose to put the financial existence of our club on the line because we feel the need to further complicate our athletic and mental shortcomings by throwing a bunch of expensive "challenging" design characteristics in front of us to make the game more fun? This is a double whammy to me, if I have ever seen one! What is the matter with us? For the better of your club's financial health, if \$10 per nine holes is all your players are willing to shell out, design and manage it to cost \$7 a hole to maintain. Eventually we successfully culture the greater golfing group into enjoying simpler design plans, enjoying great greens and cold beer that match the dollar they are willing to put forward. The cool part is that we now put that \$3 a hole profit back in the bank to put towards capital savings and profit. Officially, a golf

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Golf Results!

Net 114 **Brian Roth** **Greg Hunnicutt**
Brian Johnston
Cody Eck

Net 120 **Sean Coffey**
Becky Bowling
Richard Strautman
Joe Aholt

Net 122 **Randy Luke**
Beau Artist
Bart Brandell
David Phipps



So close, but missing out on the money by “just thees much” was a tie between:

Net 124 **Jason Sigmund**
Ken Nice
Kevin Hicks
Shane Shaffer

Net 124 **Chad Allen**
Tyler Mickels
Alex Bliss
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property is truly sustainable in operation and easy to preserve for generations to come.

2019 which will be remembered for some time now as the most recent golf boom in decades, since golf was one of the most sensible and relatively safe activities to do during the pandemic. If you are like the average course that profited over the last few seasons after struggling to turn a profit for likely decades, are you going to re-invest that money into the property towards that myriad of deferred maintenance challenges you likely have today? Or are you going to finally fatten your pockets for once because it's been years?

I can't blame any operator for fattening their pockets but now do we see the problem at hand? This could be the only opportunity for a while to act on some needed renovation or equipment replacement. It could be another decade before we see profits like this again. Let's not expect all that deferred maintenance to magically make it another 10+ years. It is a potential disaster in the long term to do so.

Let's talk about some theories on golf tradition and where I believe the root of most shortcomings came from over the last 100 years. Consider these bullets:

- ♦ Golf is an extremely old and traditional game — therefore is extremely stubborn when change is necessary.

- ♦ Is it fair to say that the majority of golf courses now are built by current or former golf professionals who love the game of golf as much as the rest of us, but have little golf maintenance background? How often does upper management (or the bigger players) of any given club decide to renovate bunkers before asking the superintendent how sound the more important foundational assets are — like the staff, irrigation system or mowing equipment?

- ♦ Superintendents are responsible for maximizing and spending 60-75% of the entire operations budget. The superintendent oversees the health of the most expensive tool on the property (being the irrigation system), but sadly, still feels they have little influence or say within the organization.

- ♦ Most golf courses have had a tough time keeping their team members focused on their true strengths and skills within the organization. Clubs still ignorantly rely on so many staff members to make decisions on big money topics, of which they may have little education or direct experience.

- ♦ Only in the last 50 years, or so, have superintendents become more educated and held at a different standard within the organization. The character of Carl Spackler was funny, but not helpful in how, even to this day, many golfers still view the role of the person responsible for keeping the greens rolling smoothly.

This brings me to the money. Who decided \$400-\$1,000 annually was enough to sustain your facility, and based on what details? It might be enough, but how do you break this down to really know? What does this \$400 actually cover? Who is qualified to make decisions on what type and quantity of resources are needed for any given property? Maybe in order to produce an accurate outlook of existence, the facility needs to ask an experienced superintendent what a successful capital, staff, irrigation and equipment capital plan, that mirrors their proprietary conditioning demands, should look like.

It is a mistake to compare yourself to other properties or clubs when it comes to how to price yourself, how to manage the facility, or how to irrigate etc. The only way this would be fair is if you had a carbon copy property to make the comparison. If this is the route you think is wise, then you better make sure your property requires less input to produce the same result. Otherwise, you will only get worse as time goes by and eventually fail.

Do yourself a favor and ask 10 random golfers of all levels these two questions:

"Would you own or operate a golf course of your own?"

"Would you run and operate your personal business like your golf facility does?"

I am willing to bet seven out of 10 will almost immediately respond, "Oh hell no!" Most of these people are relatively successful people within their communities and I assume understand money and business 101 to a fair degree. How many board members ride through their terms knowing that the club is struggling and needs to spend money to address some major capital challenges like replacing an irrigation system, but choose not to address it because politically and socially they are worried about being tagged as part of the group that just cost everyone a bunch more in dues?

Do some basic timeline math. Many courses were built in the 90s and are reaching that 30 year mark where irrigation systems, equipment packages, bunkers, cart paths, facilities, etc., are getting tired and reaching their service lifetimes. I wonder, of the

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many properties that have had to close their doors over the last three to four decades, what percentage of them were built during the elaborate 90s design boom?

If anyone is scratching their head as to why we have trouble filling jobs in the industry, I can help you out. Aside from okay compensation for what we accomplish on any given day, we are working with limited staff and property tools that are physically weak. The only way for most supers to combat these weak shortcomings is by donating more of their personal time past an already 10 hour workday to get through it. Paying me well to work with poor tools still yields inconsistent results. Paying me so-so to work with great tools doesn't help me build a retirement fund. Paying me well to work with satisfactory tools allows me to succeed and you to keep me happy in my position for many years. Well educated, hard-working staff who remain in any work environment for several years greatly benefits any club.

I swear, ever since the recession of 2008, there are a few who still lead their day by saying, "We just have to do more with less." I promise you that you will be on your way to sending your facility into a downward spiral with that line of thinking, if you chose to do it for the 13th consecutive year. The only fair way to rebound at this point is to do more with more, because we did more with less, way too long.

Unfortunately, for many great superintendents of this era, it's sadly becoming more and more of an undesirable of a career and many are choosing to leave "early." If we don't put more effort into educating golfers and operators on how to calculate the cost of doing business — physically showing them the shortcomings of the turf care centers by exposing them to how inefficient the day can be without the right staff with equipment — and provide

a way to safely express the benefits of providing our teams with stronger tools, the golf industry should prepare for more educated and talented people walking away from the business.

Sustain the game. Collectively as an industry, we all need to take more time to expose the game by teaching new people how to play. I strongly believe that if given the chance to strike a ball purely just one time in their life, most humans will be hooked forever. We don't do a good enough job creating affordable and available environments in all of golf to increase that magical opportunity for the masses. As much personal time that a typical assistant superintendent has to spend getting through his day helping to keep the course in pristine conditions at a minimal wage, I believe an assistant golf professional should be giving free golf lessons almost daily within an eight-hour shift to indefinitely preserve the next generation of players that we desperately need to sustain our existence. And now that new exciting facilities like Top Golf are trending and showing great success, I believe there should be one small hitting bay at the end where an inspiring golf professional should be giving free, five-minute tutorials all day long to the guests that come.

We need to do a better job of assessing our current existence and monitoring how everything around us affects how WE perform. I believe most experienced superintendents already do this day in and out, but most are afraid to ask for what they or their property really needs because it comes with an additional cost or breaks "tradition" too much. If we don't stand up for what is right for us and the property, the groomed acreage continues to progressively deteriorate, good people lose their jobs and the course crashes anyway. What a ridiculous outcome. If this is unfortunately an existence of yours and you choose what you think is the safe route, at the time by remaining silent, then know

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there is likely an expiration for you. At some point all those shortcomings of the course will add up and the finger will unfortunately be pointed at your chest.

If most golf courses were designed and built to match the revenue the people surrounding it were willing to give over a lifetime, as a superintendent I wouldn't be asking these questions.

- Why don't most golf courses have a reasonable maintenance facility built at the time of construction?
- Why do most golf courses struggle to keep reasonable operating equipment in their fleet?
- Why do most golf courses have a tough time keeping their irrigation system in check and operating soundly?
- Why have most golf courses failed to put together a sound capital plan?

Why does it seem most golf courses are far more reactive than proactive?

Solution (outside of obtaining and strengthening your staff):

1. Clean up your irrigation system and understand how it works so it works better for you. Great irrigating practices always yield healthy turf stands on its own. Poor irrigating directly affects everything around the golf course negatively and at a bigger cost than you may think.
2. Figure out what the true cost of doing business really is for your course, including all capital savings that the majority agrees will provide a product level that satisfies the mass.
3. Figure out how much average revenue the club can comfortably generate or be willing to bring in themselves collectively through rounds and dues. Do you have 400 members only

willing to pay \$250 a year? Okay, that's the number, so let's break this down. You will soon understand what your club can really afford to provide as a product for each buck given by the members or players.

4. If the cost of doing business is more than what the course can bring in daily/annually, then it is pretty simple. The facility needs to prioritize its management practices, and more importantly, what physical maintenance demands are not of importance and remove them (for example, removing bunkers, extra heights of cut, artificial landscapes and water features, etc.)

5. Incorporate new technologies that are finally here and can work well in your overall management plan. (Examples: robotic mowing, better irrigation tech, drone technology and how we manage our properties agronomically.) We have to think outside of our current boxes and make better choices. Just don't be the last operator or superintendent left in a box.

The negative impact of losing that once open and preserved space is not generally felt until it is too late. If greed and development gets to be too thick over our lifetime, then these developers will have plenty of cash in their pockets, but one less recreation to enjoy. There is definitely a balance to be considered here.

My advice is to make sure a long-time superintendent is helping you make big physical and financial decisions from here on out, because they are truly one of a few that can share real stories that will help you develop sound decisions for your club.

For those of you that disagree with any of this content, or want to share personal stories, etc., please reach out and let's have a conversation. The more we talk, the more we learn from each other — which ultimately makes the game stronger for all.

Take care and I am sure I will see or talk to many of you again soon. (wilmarthben@gmail.com, 208-469-0867)

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