

## “The Last of the Old West” Jackson, Wyoming

We can't wait to see you in Jackson, Wyo., March 30 & 31, 2015, at the “Almost” Spring Meeting! Your reasons to attend will be

- ✓ the quality of education,
- ✓ to hang out and glean information from your peers,
- ✓ to enjoy the breath taking views,
- ✓ the chance to check out two national parks surrounding Jackson Hole—Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Forest with roaming bison, moose, and more (on your own or with a tour),
- ✓ to play in the snow with downhill or cross-country skis, snowboards, tubes or snowmobiles,
- ✓ or all of the above.

Jackson Hole is closer than you think – less than 400 miles from many of the major Montana cities.

Featured speakers include David M. Kopec, Ph.D., Extension Specialist / Turfgrass Management - The School of Plant Sciences, University of Arizona; Tim Moraghan, Aspire Golf (former USGA's championship agronomist), Rhett Evans, CEO, GCSAA, and more, as well as the USGA Green Section.

The conference will be at the Snow King Hotel with a GREAT rate of \$95 for single/double. It is important to note that reservations must be made prior to February 27. It is equally important to be aware that cancellations must be made prior to seven days of arrival.

Last day of skiing is expected to be at the Snow King Resort on March 29, but the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort is expected to be open until early April. Grand Targhee is also just 42 miles away.

### **PPGCSA Events:**

**Peaks & Prairies GCSA Private Webcast,**

*TBA, January, 2015*

**Chapters of The Northwest Hospitality Room**

*February 25, 2015, Buckhorn Saloon, San Antonio, TX*

**PPGCSA “Almost” Spring Meeting**

*March 30 & 31, 2015, Jackson Hole, Wyo.*

## Does your golf course know this?

The much-appreciated \$5,000 annual grant from the MSGA was accompanied by a special message to our members expressing that the participation of the golf courses in Montana helps make our grant possible. When your course requires an MSGA handicap for events, you are helping several important programs (including ours) that either impact golf directly or helps to keep golf strong in Montana.

## Stay on the San Antonio River Walk

Our chapter room block is ending soon at the Drury Plaza. Located on the River Walk, you are in the midst of all the great things the River Walk offers. You can also enjoy two complimentary meals a day along with free beverage tickets! With only a four-block stroll to the convention center, GCSAA bus service will *not* be available. The 2015 GIS is February 21-26.

GIS conference properties are running from \$149 - \$225 a night. We have selected The Drury Plaza, with all the extras, for \$162 a night. Make your reservations now. For a link that will take you directly to a reservation in our block, visit the News tab of our website.

## Buckhorn Saloon and Museum

Sponsors are appreciated for the 2015 Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room! The event is going to be at a special location in San Antonio, Wednesday, 6:30 - 9:30 February 25, 2015 - at the Buckhorn Saloon and Museum. This is a highly popular venue in San Antonio and one that offers a great atmosphere.

Delicious complimentary food will be offered during the evening, as always! Our usual event budget is not large enough to cover beverages at this venue and this event will be a cash bar. Contact Lori to help sponsor the event.



## Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association

### OFFICERS

President: **Sean Sullivan**, CGCS, The Briarwood, Billings, Mont., (406) 248-5153 (S) briarmain@pop.180com.net  
 Vice President: **Dan Rootes** Ponderosa Butte Golf Course, Colstrip, Mont. 406/ 748-3326(S) or 406/ 749-3045 (C) dlrootes@hotmail.com  
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 Past President: **Dan Tolson**, CGCS, 3 Creek Ranch, Jackson, Wyo., 307/ 734-0385 (S) or 307/ 413-3627 (C) dtolson@3creekranch-jh.com

### COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Education: Dan Rootes  
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 Membership: Dan Rootes  
 Nominating: Dan Tolson, CGCS  
 Scholarship: Jason Busch

**Allied Member Liaison:** Jason Aerni (Simplot Partners)  
**Assistant Superintendent Liaison:** Cody Schulke, Yellowstone CC

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*“Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”*

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## President's Message

Sean Sullivan, CGCS  
The Briarwood, Billings, Mont.

Once again, I have the privilege to serve PPGCSA as president. I have been off the BOD for a year, yet I know the priorities for the chapter are the same - getting the membership to engage in chapter events and providing quality educational opportunities. It would appear that these issues are worldwide problems for all associations. Well, I have come up with an analogy that might help describe the problem in a manner that all Superintendents/ Head Greenkeepers will understand.

Let's say that the Chapter/Association is a golf green, the BOD/Executive Director is the Superintendent/Head Greenkeeper of the "golf green", the golfers are the members of the Chapter/Association, and the unrepaired ball marks are the issues being dealt with. Follow me so far? At every opportunity the "Superintendent/HGK" communicates to the "golfers" the need to help fix the ball marks. This is done, either by written communication or person-to-person. Just like you would guess, there is always a story to go with the unrepaired ball marks.

Overtime, some of the ball marks get fixed and the condition of the "green" improves. But, no matter how much communication goes on, there is always some "unrepaired ball marks" left unattended. Well, those "ball marks" are the issue of non-engaged members. That leaves the "Superintendent/HGK" and engaged "golfers" scratching their heads as to why some "golfers" refuse to fix their "ball marks." Everyone knows that the "golf green" is at its best when there are no unrepaired ball marks! Don't be that "golfer" - fix your "ball mark" to improve your experience. Don't be the "golfer" just paying dues expecting the "greens" to be perfect, without any effort of your own.

That may or may not have been easy to follow along; it sound more clever in my mind. The main point? Get engaged in the Chapter/Association and help it to be better. It won't take up a lot of your time, just like bending over to fix a ball mark.

I hope all is well with everyone and that you and your families have a safe and happy holiday season. And when you get a chance... fix your ball mark!

Kind regards, Sean Sullivan, CGCS

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It has been an honor to serve on the board for the past six years and as president this year. Standing on the shoulders of many men greater than I, who have served in the past and helped build the association into what it is today, I am humbled. It has been a real joy having the opportunity to gain experience in a leadership role, give back to an industry that has given much to me, and lean on fellow peers as we made some big decisions and made a few changes.

I've been encouraged by all the other dedicated members who are willing to give of their time and energy to serve on the board or committees. Thank you, men, for all you do. As past president, I will gather a new slate of candidates for board service next fall. If you're at all interested in getting involved at the board level, and I highly recommend you do, please contact me. It is an experience you won't regret.

There was a bit of a change-up this year in the normal progression of elections. Joe Fernau, CGCS, Casper Municipal Golf Course, as vice president this year, decided to take much deserved retirement after 40 years in the business and two stints of service on the board. Congratulations, Joe, and best of luck

## Past President's Message

Dan Tolson, CGCS  
3 Creek Ranch Golf Course,  
Jackson, Wyo



Joe Fernau, CGCS and Dan Tolson, CGCS above

in this exciting next chapter. Sean Sullivan, CGCS, The Briarwood, Billings, Mont., has graciously agreed to step back into service and serve a second term as President. He was unanimously voted in at the business meeting in Billings and I know he will do a terrific job. Thanks, Sean!

Before I sign off, a few reminders to keep fresh in your minds...

Save the date for the "Almost" Spring Meeting in Jackson Hole, Wyo! March 30-31, 2015, we will gather at Snow King Resort. Bring your skis, snowshoes or camera for a fantastic

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## 2014 Turfgrass Seed Harvest Update

Article provided by: Jason Aerni, Simplot Partners

**BLUEGRASS:** Proprietary bluegrass 2014 crop was significantly down from earlier projections, with most areas seeing anywhere from 15-30% reductions in yields from crop estimates and off of average. Why? Most likely, heat during pollination caused a short pollen period that, coupled with a sub-zero cold snap with no snow cover in January, hurt the plant. The seed heads were visually there for a good crop, so all indicators would point to poor pollination period and poor seed fill from heat.

Quality continues to be a challenge in the production areas of Washington where burning is no longer an accepted cultural practice. This has led to more issues with *Poa annua* and Alkaligrass and also a new-comer to the list of problem other grasses that we battle, Rattail Fescue.

Look for high-end elite bluegrass to continue to be in short supply through the next selling season. Common Kentucky bluegrass and low-end proprietaries in the dryland production areas had average yields, however, acreage is still very low from historical numbers, so look for supplies to remain somewhat tight.

**RYEGRASS:** Perennial ryegrass is coming in about average, however supplies are very tight as carryover was near zero coming in to new crop. Cleaners are busy trying to get product into the pipeline as fast as they can. Quality has been spotty, with cleaners having to re-clean more than normal to get *Poa* out. Look for this specie to continue to be very tight on into the winter and spring.

**TALL FESCUE:** Yields are coming in average to slightly above average. Quality is looks good and inventories are stable and seed available. Consumption of tall fescue has increased due to the price point of turf type tall fescue versus other species that are in short supply. Look for pricing to remain firm and supplies to be in line with demand.

**FINE FESCUES:** Yields were spotty and below normal, good quality fine leafs will continue to be hard to find, especially hard and sheep's. Look for prices to remain strong and possibly increase down the road.

**BENTGRASS:** Above average consumption last spring to repair winter damaged fairways has brought inventories to lower than projected numbers with few acres in the ground for harvest

### Message from Tolson

continued from page 4

late winter vacation. We have some great speakers lined up, including Dave Kopec, Ph.D., Tim Moraghan, Aspire Golf, and Rhet Evans, CEO of GCSAA. If you'd like more information of things to do while in Jackson, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

### We have an all new website with many powerful features.

Member directory, job listings and an up-to date calendar are live. You can register for events or check out the Facebook page. Also, if you have a blog you'd like to share with other members, email it to us and we'll include a link right from the website.

### Don't miss the Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Event

at the Buckhorn Saloon in San Antonio. Enjoy great food and networking in a unique and entertaining south Texas history museum & bar.

We will be hosting, for the first time ever, a "Chapters of the Northwest Turf Expo" in at the Coeur d' Alene Resort October 16 & 17, 2017. This meeting will take the place of our normal fall meeting in Billings and will include a bigger than ever trade show, world-renowned speakers and a golf tournament pitting association against association. It will be a lot of work getting the event organized, so if you'd like to be on a task group to help, please let me know.

I am excited about the future of the association and confident we are in a good financial position and moving forward to deliver incredible value to the members. The vision of Peaks & Prairies is to provide relevant, diverse, personal and affordable education; advocate for a geographically diverse membership; and build camaraderie through inclusive networking opportunities. I hope in the next year you will take advantage of some of the benefits Peaks & Prairies can offer you through that vision.

2014. This will certainly put a pinch on supplies until we roll into 2015 crop when newly planted acres will come on line. Look for tight supplies the next 12 month cycle on into fall 2015.

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# OVERHEARD IN THE HALLWAY

Clark Throssell, Ph.D.,  
Turfgrass R&D, Inc., Billings, Mont.

The 2014 Peaks & Prairies Fall Meeting wrapped up yesterday (Thursday, October 30) and if you missed the Fall Meeting, you missed a great opportunity to learn from two turfgrass experts, Brain Horgan, Ph.D. and Cale Bigelow, Ph.D. Brian and Cale each made great presentations with plenty of practical information that could be implemented on your golf course to improve playing conditions.

In addition to the great presentations, I always learn a few new things by talking to people in the hallways between presentations. What follows are a couple of the interesting things I learned in the hallways that might be helpful to you.

## FootGolf at Bell Nob Golf Course

FootGolf is a relatively new sport in which players kick a regulation soccer ball over a golf course toward a 21-inch cup. Players start at the tee and must negotiate rough, bunkers, water hazards and slopes just as a regular golfer would, finishing at the cup with a couple of delicate and well positioned kicks to put the soccer ball in the cup.



Dwayne Dillinger, CGCS, superintendent at Bell Nob Golf Course in Gillette, Wyoming, created a FootGolf course on one nine at the 27-hole golf course. Dwayne said the only modification needed to accommodate FootGolf was to purchase and install the 21-inch cups. The cups are available from several suppliers and have an insert in the center that a regulation golf cup and flag fit into to mark the hole location.

Dwayne and the staff installed the cups for FootGolf to the side of the putting greens and the FootGolf course was open for play. To help encourage play, Dwayne handed out free FootGolf passes to soccer players at their rec league games and posted advertisements for the FootGolf course at the clubhouse.

So far, the feedback has been all positive from both FootGolf players and golfers according to Dillinger. Dwayne has seen some groups in which all the players play FootGolf, groups in which all the players are playing golf and groups in which some players are playing FootGolf and others golf. Regardless of the game being played, Dwayne is pleased to see people using and enjoying the golf course. Continued page 8



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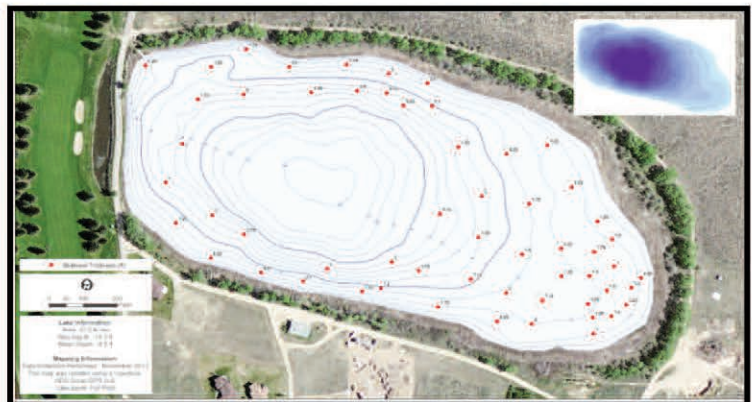
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Dwayne Dillinger, CGCS

## Overheard in the Hallway

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The only drawback that Dwayne mentioned was his sore hamstring the day after playing a few holes of FootGolf to test the layout. Feel free to contact Dwayne at [ddbellenob@collinscom.net](mailto:ddbellenob@collinscom.net) for more information about his experiences with FootGolf.

### Winter Watering

While talking in the hallways and at breaks at the Fall Meeting, the topic of winter watering came up fairly frequently. What follows are a few things I learned in regard to winter watering. First, not everyone waters in the winter.

Based on their experience at their golf course, many superintendents don't water in the winter due to the weather at their course, usually because of ample snow fall and/or rain, or they haven't experienced turf damage due to winter desiccation.

Those who do water are usually faced with winters that are open (no snow cover), cold and with plenty of wind, interspersed with periods of a week or two of "warm" weather where the high temperature might reach the 40s or even the low 50s ° F for a day or two. Any time the temperature is above freezing, the turfgrass plants will require a small amount of water. Between the windy, dry, open, cold conditions and the above freezing temperature breaks in the winter weather, water is being lost from the turf and soil surface. This leads some superintendents to water in the winter.

While everyone who waters in the winter has a slightly different approach, a few common themes were identified. Most use water tanks pulled by a truck or tractor and apply the water using a nozzle at the end of a hose while others might attach a sprinkler to the end of the hose.

A few use frost-free hose bibs located at strategic points around the golf course.

The amount of water applied varied by golf course, but usually was in the range of 100 gallons per 1,000 sq. ft. of putting green turf. For a frame of reference, 100 gallons of water per 1,000 sq. ft. is equal to 0.16 inches of water. Or another way to look at it is 25 gallons of water per 1,000 sq. ft. is equal to 0.04 inches of water.

I talked to Joe Stribley, superintendent at Yellowstone Country Club in Billings, and Bob Popp, superintendent at Laurel Golf Club in Laurel, to get their experiences on how they water during the winter. Joe applies about 90 gallons of water per 1,000 sq. ft. every time he waters in the winter, using a nozzle on the end of a hose fed by a 500 gallon tank. Using this set up, it takes Joe and his staff about a day and a half to water 20 greens. Depending on the winter, Joe might water a maximum of 5 or 6 times per winter and he relies on his experience, observation of the grass and weather forecast to make his decision on whether to water.

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## 2014 Scholarship Recipients!

The number of scholarship applications received this year offered a challenge for the Scholarship Committee. These fine candidates were narrowed down to three recipients, as announced at the Fall Meeting! Congratulations to:

**Zachariah Klonsinski**, Legacy Scholarship (Kurt Klonsinski)  
University of Notre Dame \$ 1,250

**Stephen Grass**, Turf Management  
Rutgers State University- \$1,000

**Mike Kunda** (Asst. Supt., Eagle Ridge Golf Club),  
Turf Management, Pennsylvania State University - \$750

## PPGCSA January Webcast

The 7th annual Peaks & Prairies GCSA webcast will be in January! The topic, presenter and date will be announced soon! The previous web casts have been a great success at each regional site as participants continue the discussion with their peers.

Watch your email for registration information in December.

## Welcome to our new members!

**Nathan Cox**  
Dessert Green Turf  
Road 2 Box 13305, Moses Lake, WA 98837  
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**Matt Dammann**  
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## Overheard in the Hallway continued from page 8

Bob takes a different approach to watering in winter. He uses a 1,500 gallon tank and places four sprinklers on each green connected by hoses. Two pumps move the water from the tank through the sprinklers and 1,500 gallons of water are applied to each green complex which includes the green, collar, approach and surrounds. It takes Bob and his staff about two days to water 21 green complexes. Bob usually blows out his irrigation system in late October and if there hasn't been a meaningful amount of rain and or snow by Thanksgiving, he will start watering the green complexes. The turf condition, Bob's experience and short term weather forecast determine how many times he will water during the winter. Bob also uses a 250-gallon tank with a nozzle at the end of a hose to spot-water high spots and other problem areas on greens during the winter.

Neither Joe nor Bob apply a green colorant to their greens in the winter. Both have applied a green colorant in the past but found that the green colorant made it too difficult to determine the condition of the turf in the winter.

### Soil Moisture Meters

If you have a soil moisture meter, I encourage you to use it this fall to monitor soil moisture content throughout the fall and into winter until the soil freezes and start using it to monitor soil moisture in spring once the soil thaws. Pick two greens, two tees and two fairways to monitor. Monitor several different locations on each green, tee and fairway. Measure soil moisture at nearly the same spot each time you monitor and record the

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readings. I suggest monitoring once a week or once every other week. Make a note of the turf conditions each time you measure soil moisture content, paying particular attention to how fast the turf recovers in spring.

If you follow this monitoring procedure for a few years, you will know the target soil moisture content for your golf course going into the winter and you can supply the proper amount of water to reach the target and improve turf recovery in spring.

Enjoy the Holidays with your family and friends. Go skiing, hunting, fishing or anything to get you away from the golf course. After all, it is winter, and you need a break, just like the grass.

*Clark Throssell, Ph.D., is a turfgrass scientist and works with the turfgrass industry on technical and scientific issues. He serves as the technical resource for Peaks & Prairies GCSA members. (This article can only be reproduced with written permission of the author).*

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# 2014 Chapter Delegates Report

**Dan Tolson, CGCS**  
**3 Creek Ranch, Jackson, Wyo.**



In early October, I spent two days at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kans., with 100 other affiliated chapter delegates. The purpose of the meeting was three-fold: 1) Updates from GCSAA executives and board about current events, initiatives and advocacy on behalf of the golf industry. 2) Discuss in "think tank" style a few ideas to change classifications and dues. 3) Get to know the current board and the candidates running for the board.

It would be impossible to sum up in a short article all that happened in those two days and all that GCSAA is doing on our behalf. If this is as far as you're going to read, just trust me when I tell you that the dues we pay (which only cover 26% of the association budget) are worth every penny and GCSAA makes a hugely positive impact on the golf industry from which we all benefit. Here are the highlights:

## We Are Golf Coalition

*We are Golf* is a coalition of industry partners, which now includes the PGA and the USGA. With an eight-part federal agenda, the #1 goal is maintaining visibility of the golf industry with Congress and the Executive Branch. *We are Golf* hosted National Golf Day for the seventh straight year on May 21 and held over 120 scheduled congressional meetings in one day! Check out the website at [wearegolf.com](http://wearegolf.com) for

some really great talking points about the impact of the golf industry.

## Rounds 4 Research

The auction dates for the 2015 Rounds 4 Research campaign have been set for June 8-21. I encourage everyone to participate, as it is free money for the chapter. 80% of the proceeds from the auction come back to the chapter and 20% goes to the EIFG. There are two ways to participate - donation of rounds and purchase of rounds. Donating is easy to do online at [rounds4research.com](http://rounds4research.com). Do it over the winter when you have time and budgets are being created so it's already done when things get busy in the spring. Purchasing rounds is also easy at [bidding4good.com](http://bidding4good.com). Start thinking now about how you can best promote the auction to your clientele. Postings are available free of charge if you would like help. Contact either Dave Phipps or me. Be looking for a call from Cole Clark, Stillwater Golf Club (Peter Yegen Golf Course effective the first of the year) this winter/spring as he volunteered again to solicit donations and educate others about the program. Thanks, Cole, great job last year increasing our participation!

## Government Relations

The government relations team at GCSAA is very active monitoring, educating and lobbying for the issues that directly affect the golf industry. From immigration laws to the EPA, there's a lot going on at any given time. Interested in being a part of the team? The newly launched **Grassroots Ambassadors Program** engages local Supt.'s to partner with specific congressmen to take action, send letters, and raise awareness for the golf industry. The pro-

recently in delaying the EPA's proposed Waters of the US rule. Thank you to all who have already agreed to step up as ambassadors, and if you are interested in more info, give me a call.

## Pending Changes to your GCSAA membership:

- A dues increase of \$10/year will be on the ballot at the annual business meeting in San Antonio. The Peaks board is supportive of the increase and confident that GCSAA is doing everything possible to manage the association efficiently and keep dues as low as possible. The increase is evaluated every other year and uses the consumer price index and other factors.
- A debate is active regarding changing the classification of membership. With the goal of increasing visibility and credibility of Class A members and reducing confusion, the GCSAA board is proposing changing from 13 classifications to 5 and dropping the SM classification. After feedback from Peaks members at the fall meeting in Billings, our chapter is supportive of the change but feels strongly that a continuing education requirement needs to remain in place for Class A status.
- A new classification for Equipment Manager members will likely be added in the future as the GCSAA board and the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association board discuss merging together.

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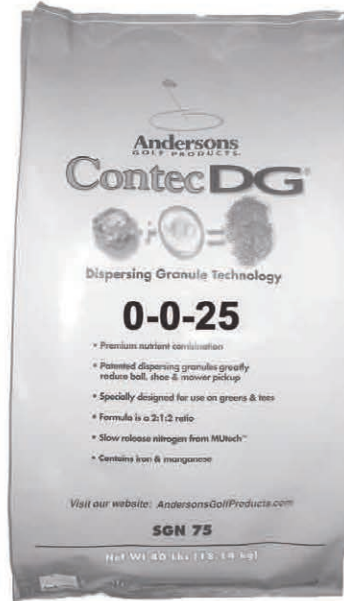
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# A MEMBER IN PROFILE

## Danny Renz

Douglas Community Golf Course, Douglas, Wyo.



My name is Danny Renz. I've been a golf course superintendent for seven years now in Douglas, Wyo. Prior, I was an assistant in my hometown of Hot Springs, SD, following a construction internship at the Jack Nicklaus design Dismal River Club. I didn't always want to be a superintendent. I didn't even think too much about the profession until after my first career choice didn't work out as planned. I thought about what I would like to do next and went back to college. I was either going to go back and teach and coach, or do what I'm doing now.

Some days, like all superintendents, I ask myself why the hell I chose this profession. But, most days it's pretty rewarding. I love the challenge it presents and in this newsletter I'm going to talk about one of my biggest challenges.

### Working With What You Got

Small town 18-hole golf courses can be challenging in many ways. You have the issue of a smaller population to draw from, which in turn makes your budgets smaller but your

expectations are just as high. It's also hard to draw a large amount of people to come to a small town to play a golf course that is located in a small-populated area to begin with - even if it's one of the better courses around. But most of all, it's hard to find employees.

Douglas, Wyoming, is a big energy town. There's coal, oil, and methane. All places pay very well, and with a small population to draw employees, we just can't compete with the energy companies to win those employees over.

When I first took the job in Douglas in 2008, all those energy jobs were here and it was hard to find employees, but the new ways to access the oil around Douglas have created a sizable oil boom. It is good for the economy, but it has caused the cost of living in Douglas to sky rocket and make it ten times harder to find employees then it was in 2008. Our labor

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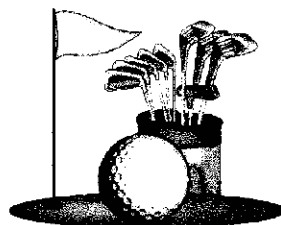


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**Member Profile** continued from page 16

budget is not even close to what it needs to be to pay anyone enough to draw them away from the energy jobs, or even pay them enough to live in this town. It's been very frustrating, stressful, and challenging at times.

So how do I deal with this issue? It's not easy and sometimes I feel like there's absolutely nothing I can do to make it better, but we still find a way to produce a good product. I'm fortunate to have a couple guys who have stayed with me who I can count on, but we all know that's just not enough. We have had to create ways to make sure we have time to take care of what matters the most, the actual playing areas of the golf course. We've done this by eliminating some landscaping and/or changing to plants that take less attention. We have created more no-mow areas. We've cut back on watering or eliminated watering altogether in the areas farther outside of the fairways and greens, which has also been good on conserving water and saving a little money. Eliminating a couple bunkers that are a maintenance headache and really don't come into play also has helped. We've also changed wetting agents and



spray and aerate our drier areas to eliminate or require less hand watering. In addition, we also asked some retired guys to volunteer some time when we have bigger jobs to do or to help us prepare for our bigger tournaments.

All these things would make a person think that the membership



would be displeased with the changes, but it has actually been well accepted. I was a little afraid of what people might think, but it's been pretty much all positive and I believe that is because we do such a good job on the areas where people should be playing golf. I just inform golfers that if you hit it that far off line you shouldn't be rewarded with a good lie, and most of them agree.

Our greens, fairways, tees, and immediate rough are in better shape than they have ever been since I've been here, and maybe, even in the history of this golf course. That, I think, is what really matters.

Would I rather have it different and have employees? Sure, we all would, but I think some of those changes I made, I would have made anyway, because the golfers are just as happy and it's saved us money. Sometimes golfers just have to learn what is most important on a golf course - to be able to keep it open and still produce a good product. It is up to us to educate them.

Next year, we may be able to offer some housing for employees, and if that happens, I want to look into starting an internship program and/or an H-2B program or something similar. But, if any of you have any extra employees I would appreciate it if you send them my way:) In the meantime, all of you enjoy a little bit of downtime.

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# Grass Notes

## Pete Grass, CGCS GCSAA Secretary/Treasurer Hilands Golf Club, Billings, Mont.

I have previously written about the history of GCSAA and having to know where you have been to move into the future. I do truly believe in that thought process in my personal, work, and volunteer life, along with hoping that our government leaders use that same filter in their decision making process. Another factor to consider as a decision maker is to admit when something has not worked out as originally intended, and consider making it a work in progress with continued refinements.

I am sorry that this article gets long, but without the history, I feel you can't understand how we arrived at the present. If you need to save a few minutes, skip to the last two paragraphs for my final thoughts about where we are today.

For this article, I will look at the 13 year-old Professional Development Initiative (PDI) that, to me, was intended to elevate the professionalism of the Superintendent position and give GCSAA a marketable title "Class A" that the association should then promote to potential employers and influential golfers. At the time, it seemed a logical and good thing to do, as the only requirement prior to this was to be a superintendent three years and pay your dues. New requirements implemented by PDI included a matrix of job experience, formal education and continuing education, along with possessing a state pesticide

license to become and maintain Class A. That would be considered the "top" classification achievable, as CGCS is an additional designation, not a classification. All CGCS's are Class A members. To make this work, a commitment was made to make education as affordable and accessible as reasonably possible. The second major change was the term Superintendent Member (SM) to replace Class B. This is the current membership classifications and standards that we operate under today.

Three years ago, the GCSAA board wanted to take a 10-year look back at PDI and "did it do what it was intended to do?" The Membership Standards Advisory Group was formed with a cross section of all types of members with diversity of classification/designation types, regions and facility types. Led by two past presidents, they took a deep dive into the history and current status of PDI. They did a very extensive analysis of all of the factors involved and current state of the industry and I thank them for their time and efforts. The following is a very brief recap of their major findings. The recognition of the superintendent profession has been elevated in the world of golf and education has become affordable and accessible. Two things stood out as far as classifications: employers and influential golfers are confused as to what membership classifications mean and what is "higher" than what (especially Class A vs SM).

The SM classification was intended to be a temporary place where people waiting to meet the experience requirement would be and changed from Class B to not make it seem a "lesser" term. Instead it had become a "parking lot" where those not wanting or willing to meet the

requirements have stayed long term.

continued page 22



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## Grass Notes continued from page 20

Your GCSAA Board has been analyzing, and quite honestly struggling, with what to do in light of these findings and the current state of the golf economy (membership decline, course closures, fewer golfers). We have, as I said at the recent delegates meeting, “cussed (not literally) and discussed” all aspects of PDI from its origin, through the MSAG work and the world today. Again, this is very oversimplified in light of the countless hours that the board and staff worked on the numerous options and possibilities that were available. We wanted to present something to the delegates that we felt might fit in today’s golf world/economy and provide all GCSAA members an inclusive association and understandable membership classifications. We examined the role or purpose of GCSAA, of which our mission statement is to serve its members, advance their profession and enhance the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game. In light of all that discussion, it was agreed that we, as an association, should not promote any one classification over another, but overall promote the profession and what our members do for their facilities, companies, educational institutions, etc. and the game of golf itself. We should provide the programs and services, along with advocacy and educational tools, to allow our members to advance their careers and provide value to their employers. What we brought forward was an idea of simplifying the number of and requirements for classifications. Reduce the total number of classifications from 13 to five (Class A, B, C, EM and Member) and remove the continuing education and pesticide license requirement associated with being Class A. All requirements of the designation “CGCS” would remain the same. The EM stands for Equipment Manager, a new proposal to bring in that vital component of the course maintenance team and provide programs, education and services for them, also.

The delegates discussed this proposal during their meeting and in general said, “Move forward in presenting it to the chapter members for discussion and feedback.” I will say it is early in the feedback process, but so far what I have been hearing is this, “Scale back the number of classifications to the five proposed.” The most significant part of that being changing the “old” SM to Class B and adding the EM classification. “Do not change either the entry level or renewal requirements of Class



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A. Make continuing education a focal point at both the national and chapter level. Promote the profession as a whole and let the individual member promote himself/herself in the job market.” I take that all to mean have GCSAA focus on our mission as I referenced above, and work on behalf of all members. Advocate to and educate others about the profession and why golf facilities are essential economic, environmental and recreational components of a community.

To tie back to my opening thoughts, we have looked at where we have been, where we are now and are looking forward to, at the very least, our short-term future to year 2020 and even beyond. If you have thoughts to share with me about this, I welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you. My contact info is available from both the GCSAA and P&P membership directories but I will save you a few minutes. My phone is 406-855-6440 and email is [pghgc@montana.net](mailto:pghgc@montana.net). I look forward to hearing from you.



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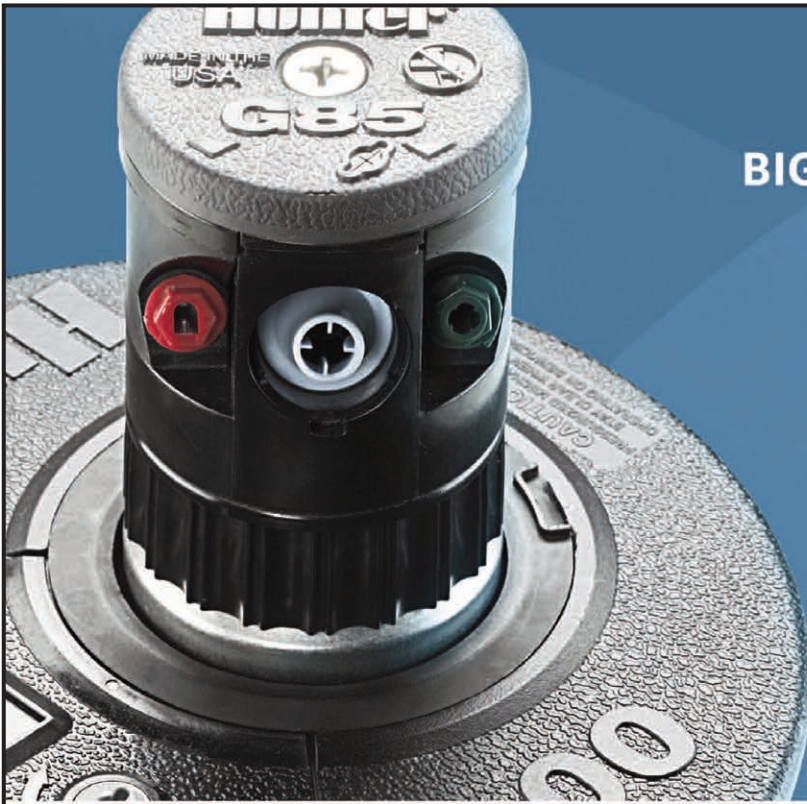
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