

Celebrate 50 Years with Us

Peaks & Prairies GCSA turns 50 in 2026. This milestone presents an opportunity for reflection and appreciation of all the leaders who have guided us and helped shape the association we are today.

The board has considered off and on for the two years how to mark the monumental event. Formal? Casual? More education? Less education? In the end, the answer seemed clear: give everyone a little extra space to network, and as always, the opportunity to learn—and maybe even be entertained.

We are excited about this Peaks & Prairies GCSA Fall Meeting & Trade Show. The group we have assembled will make it a special event. Make plans, save the dates of October 13-15, and watch for more information in August.

Fregly Appointed to the Board

The Board of Directors has recently appointed Matt Fregly, Big Sky Resort, Big Sky, Mont., as a Peaks & Prairies GCSA board member. Fregly steps into the position recently vacated by board member Russ Grover. Grover accepted a position in Colorado and we wish him the best. As requested by the board, Fregly will serve in the position until the October election.



Host a First Green Event in 2026

Interested in hosting? Contact Dave Phipps, Northwest Field Staff.

PPGCSA 50th Anniversary Fall Meeting & Trade Show, October 13-16, 2026

Mont. & Wyo, Scholarship/Edu. Golf Events - September Private Webcast, PPGCSA January 2027, TBA

Chapters of the Northwest Hospitality Room Red Fish Grill, New Orleans, LA, January 20, 2027

PPGCSA "Almost" Spring Meeting March 1-2, 2027, Great Falls

Scholarship/Education Tournaments Scheduled

The Montana and Wyoming regions will each host a September tournament to benefit the continuing education and scholarship programs of the association. This includes — as added in 2024 —(2) \$500 scholarships available to the Jr. Golf programs of two Peaks & Prairies GCSA member facilities.

These tournaments are an important way to connect during the season! Some facilities use it as a staff golf outing as you do not have to be a member to play. Full or partial teams are welcome.

More information will be available this summer. Hole sponsors and hole displays are available.

September 1:
Bridger Creek Golf Course, Bozeman, Mont. Hosted by Dane Gamble and James Gamble



September 15:
Kendrick Golf Course, Sheridan, Wyo. Hosted by Chris Cremer and Justin Bishop



Whether you will be enjoying the views of the Bridger Mountains, or the Bighorns, each trip comes with a scenic experience!

Call for Peaks & Prairies GCSA Member Directory Updates and Advertising

Our annual membership directory will be going to print this summer. Please take a moment to review your personal or company profile and make any needed changes by clicking on “your profile” under the members-only section, once you have signed into the site.

Need to reset your password? Your user name is your email address. Click on “forgot password” and follow the prompts.

“Peaks & Prairies GCSA is dedicated to furthering the education of our members for the betterment of golf and its environment.”

May 2026
 Volume 50
 Number 2



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

Inside this issue

Ramblings from Old Superintendent	page 3
Paradise in Uniquely Challenging Enviro	page 6
Chapter Leadership Symposium	page 9
Managing Putting Greens	page 10
From Gym to Greens	page 12
Beyond the Greens	page 15
New Members	page 15
The Morning Lap	page 16
Growing Forward	page 19

Advertisers index

Masek Golf Cars	page 3
Johnson Distributing	page 4
2M Company	page 5
Granite Peak Pump Service	page 6
Tom Roe & Son	page 6
Pacific Golf & Turf/Rain Bird	page 7
Midland Implement	page 8, 16, 20
Turf Solutions Inc.	page 9
Steiner Thuesen PLLC	page 10
Floratine Northwest	page 11
Planet Turf	page 12
Stotz Equipment	page 13
Magic Valley Bentgrass Sod	page 14
Helena Agri-Enterprises	page 14
Baer Design Services	page 17
Nutrien Solutions	page 17
Simplot Turf & Horticulture	page 18
Desert Green Turf	page 18

Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association

OFFICERS

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Vice President: Brandon Barkley, 3 Creek Ranch Golf Course, Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Secretary/Treasurer: Sean Sullivan, CGCS, The Briarwood, Billings, Mont.

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Allied Member Liaison: Brian McGiff, Simplot Turf & Hort.

Assistant Superintendent Liaison: Dustin Nelson, Buffalo Hill Golf Club

THE PERFECT LIE is published quarterly by Peaks & Prairies GCSA, and is edited by Lori Russell. Our newsletter is not copyrighted, but we would appreciate credit being given when original material is reprinted. Advertising and article deadlines are the 10th of February, April, July, and October.

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Ramblings from an Old Superintendent

Dwayne Dillinger, CGCS, Executive Director
Campbell County Parks and Recreation, Gillette, Wyo.

As my career comes to a close this year, I look back and think about the things that stick out in my mind.

The game of golf starts and ends with a handshake. There will be more on this later.

Over the years, I have been very fortunate to work with and mentor many people in this business, but my greatest joy has been the family ties. My dad, Lou Dillinger, who attended the first-ever meeting of WY-Mont (the predecessor to Peaks & Prairies), was an irrigation contractor for 50 years and installed irrigation on a few golf courses. My cousin Scott Dillinger,



who is the superintendent at Cheyenne Country Club, and I learned the business from my dad and then started our golf careers together in Colorado before ending up back in Wyoming. It has been a great ride together, and we have always been there for each other over the last 40 years. Now, my son, Trent Dillinger, and Scott's son, Jared Dillinger, both share that same bond: Jared is the superintendent at Three Crowns

in Casper, Wyo., and Trent is the assistant superintendent at The Powder Horn in Sheridan. The pride you feel from seeing family follow in your footsteps is the greatest feeling in the world. Three generations of Peaks & Prairies members. WOW!

The relationships in this business last a lifetime. How you make those relationships is by becoming involved and attending events. Peaks & Prairies has always been one of the better associations, and the education has been second to none. Some of the top speakers in the turf grass industry come to our meetings to share their wealth of knowledge, and because of where we are located, and the members we have, they want to come back. The programs we have for our members make it a do-not-miss event. Serving as the president of this association was a great



Trent Dillinger, Dwaine Dillinger, Jared Dillinger, Scott Dillinger honor.

When I say get involved, I also mean at the national and at the local levels. I was very fortunate to serve on national GCSAA committees and was an instructor for GCSAA for three years at the national conferences.

Any time you get a chance to work with youth organizations or any group at a local level, you should jump at it. No one advocates for our profession better than superintendents. It is important to be involved.

You can't talk about how great Peaks & Prairies is without mentioning the great turf companies that support us at events. There have been so many, and I would hate to try and name them all, but Midland Implement and Wilbur Ellis have been some of the longest-running sponsors I can remember. Great people, great friends.

Going back to relationships, it is exciting to see young people go to work on a golf course and fall in love with the industry and decide to make it a career. I have been a superintendent for 35 years and certified for 30. I've had the pleasure of introducing the business to 15 individuals at Bell Nob who have gone on to be superintendents, many of whom I still stay in touch with and follow their careers. Not sure if I taught them what to do, or not what to do, but coming to work every day

continued page 4



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Ramblings continued from page 3

knowing they were there to learn made it enjoyable. There certainly have been some stories, and I'm sure they have grown over the years. I must give a shout-out to Mike Pigg (right), who was at the first Peaks & Prairies meeting I attended in 1990. We grew up together in Laramie, Wyo., graduating together in 1982. After graduation, we went our own ways and ended up in the same business. He was a great source of information, a great superintendent, and an even better friend.

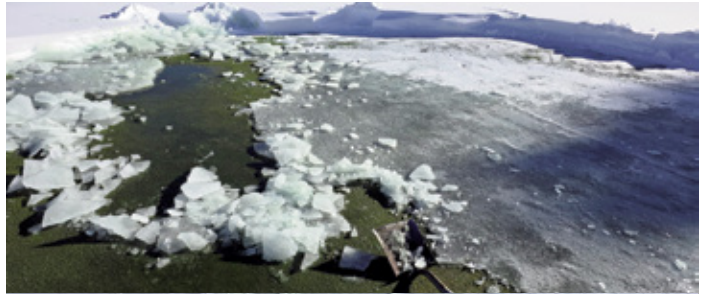


Now back to the first statement I made. The game of golf is all about relationships and how you take advantage of them. It is easy these days to go right to Professor Google for answers and not think twice about it. In the old days, you picked up a phone and called another superintendent, or reached out to an industry person, or the USGA, and because of those conversations, some great friendships were made. I say this because I have seen the young people in the business shift online over the years and meetings and events are not seen as important as they used to be. That is where I am worried about the profession moving forward. I know people are busier than ever and it is easy to jump on a Zoom or online meeting or Google information on your phone.

Just remember, the game of golf starts and ends with a handshake!!

Why I was not at the "Almost" Spring Meeting!

Garrett Turner, The Reserve at Moonlight Basin



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Paradise in a Uniquely Challenging Environment

Bobby Adamo, Assistant Superintendent,
Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, Big Sky, Mont.

Montana is known for its postcard-worthy views, mountain-town lifestyle, and long, cold, snowy winters. While these features make it a paradise for skiers and outdoor enthusiasts, they also create

a uniquely challenging environment for something as seemingly simple as growing grass in the mountains. In Big Sky, snow can stick around well into late spring and not fully melt until early June at the higher elevations of the golf course. By the time it finally melts, the clock is already ticking. While most golf courses have a month or two to prepare, heal in turf, and complete projects, we often consolidate that entire process into just three weeks in May before opening in June.

Within that small window before opening, winter damage must be addressed immediately once the turf is exposed from



snow cover; snow mold and ice damage start to show. Greens, tees, and fairways require essential cultural practices such as aeration, fertilization, and overseeding, all while temperatures are still climbing but not ideal for growing in damaged turf. At the same time, irrigation systems must be brought back online, repaired, and ready for immediate use, depending on the weather and precipitation in the forecast.

Once the courses open in June, demand for golf is high with daily rounds sometimes topping out at 200 per day in the peak season. Golfers expect pristine conditions, even in an environment that is difficult to manage. We walk a fine line between maintaining fast and firm playing surfaces and protecting the long-term health of the course. Routine cultural practices become difficult to schedule without impacting play, and construction projects must be carefully planned around tournaments and peak playing periods, often extending timelines for completion.

All of these pressures take a toll on those working in the maintenance department, and burnout can begin to set in by mid-July or early August. To combat this mid-summer “slump,” we make a strong effort to keep a positive and enjoyable work

continued page 8



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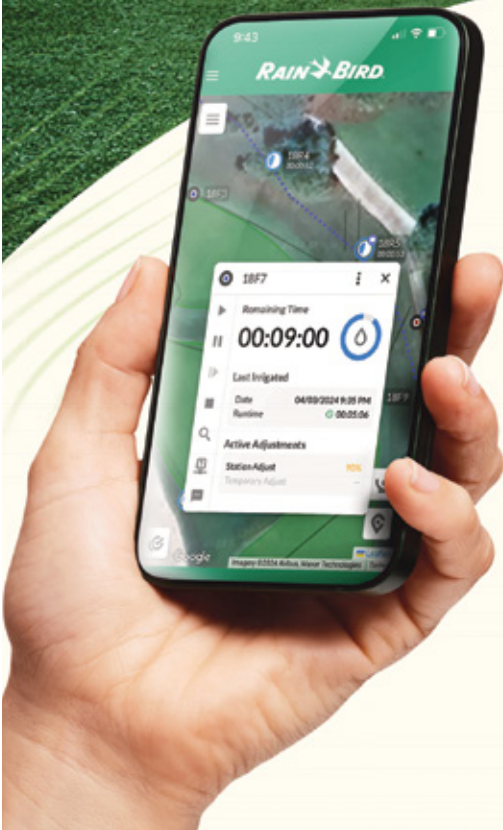
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Paradise continued from page 6

environment. Whether it's building camaraderie among crew members, organizing team activities outside of work, or simply encouraging staff to take time to enjoy the surrounding areas such as Yellowstone National Park. After all, one of the biggest draws to working in Big Sky is the opportunity to experience mountain life outside of work.

As the season progresses into late summer and early fall, wildlife becomes more active. Herds of elk and deer start to roam the course, bears prepare for winter, and the occasional moose wanders through, feeding on willows or aspen trees. While these moments add to the beauty and uniqueness of working here, they also present different challenges, including daily turf and bunker damage caused by the elk. Proper precautions, like managing trash to avoid attracting bears and maintaining crew awareness in wildlife areas, become part of the daily operations.



As fall arrives in mid-September, snow begins to reappear in the higher alpine elevations, slowly working its way down the valleys. Once again, it becomes a race against nature to prepare for the long winter ahead. By this point, most of the seasonal crew has departed, leaving a smaller team to complete fall cultural practices such as winterizing irrigation systems, applying the final fungicide applications, and finishing any remaining projects before winter to help set up for a successful next year. At the end of the day, it's just grass; it's been around for millions of years, and it will be around long after us. But in the mountains, where the challenges are constant, success depends on our dedication and that of the team around us. But we make it through the five-month sprint of golf course maintenance every year, knowing that each season brings a new set of challenges, and another opportunity to do it all over again!



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Sullivan Attends GCSAA Chapter Leadership Symposium

The Chapter Leaders/Executives Symposium held at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan., offers an opportunity to network with other association leaders from around the country and share ideas as the annual event provides leadership training, development, and support to chapters.

Peaks & Prairies GCSA Secretary Treasurer, Sean Sullivan, CGCS, The Briarwood, Billings, Mont., represented our



association along with Lori Russell, Executive Director. As a past chapter delegate, this was not Sullivan’s first experience visiting headquarters, but he enjoyed interacting with the other chapter leaders and hearing their perspectives on the challenges many chapters face. And while we generally know how the GCSAA programs run, Sullivan noted that hearing directly from staff firsthand offered another level of understanding.

We are always impressed by the number of individuals dedicated to serving the industry!

Ken Thornock, The Valley Club; Paul Stokes, Victory Ranch; Brandon Bubar, Avondale GC; Sean Sullivan, CGCS, The Briarwood; Lori Russell, Executive Director;

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Managing Putting Greens Through a Central Montana Winter

Tim Furan, Meadow Lark Country Club,
Great Falls, Mont.

At Meadow Lark Country Club, managing putting greens through a central Montana winter is anything but passive—especially with predominantly *Poa annua* surfaces and no use of protective covers. Like many facilities in the region, we also keep our regular greens open for

winter play as a benefit to members. While this adds another layer of complexity, it also sharpens the focus on practices that truly support turf survival. One topic that consistently comes up is whether winter sand topdressing provides any advantage under these conditions. In our experience, and in climates like ours, it tends to create more problems than it solves.

Once soils are frozen, sand applications cannot be effectively incorporated into the turf canopy. Instead, they remain on the surface, where they can trap moisture and contribute to ice formation. For *Poa annua*, already more susceptible to winter injury due to its shallow rooting and limited cold tolerance, prolonged ice encasement is a major concern. Without covers to buffer conditions, these ice layers can persist, increasing the risk of suffocation and crown loss. Adding sand into that equation often amplifies the issue rather than mitigating it. Beyond ice concerns, exposed sand can accelerate crown desiccation—something we are all too familiar with in the howling winds of central Montana. At Meadow Lark, we combat this by spot watering greens throughout the winter when conditions allow, helping maintain critical moisture at the crown. Even so, unincorporated sand can worsen moisture loss and leave *Poa* more exposed to temperature extremes and wind stress.

Allowing winter play introduces additional wear considerations. To help distribute traffic and reduce concentrated damage, we rotate play by cutting three holes on each green. This

approach has proven effective at spreading out foot traffic and minimizing localized stress, but it also reinforces the importance of maintaining as much turf resilience as possible heading into and through the winter months. Practices that increase surface instability—like poorly timed sand applications—work against that goal.

Instead, our focus remains on late fall preparation. The final topdressing application is timed while turf is still actively growing, ensuring sand can be fully integrated into the canopy. This provides surface smoothness and crown protection without creating layering or exposure issues. If that window is missed, we have found it is better to hold off rather than apply sand under marginal conditions.

Moisture management going into freeze-up is equally critical. Greens are maintained in a well-hydrated but not saturated state to balance the risks of desiccation and ice formation. With no covers, natural snow becomes our primary insulation, and any opportunity to retain it—particularly on exposed sites—is beneficial.

A comprehensive snow mold prevention program rounds out the strategy, serving as a key line of defense during the extended dormant period. Even with careful management, some level of winter injury is expected on *Poa* greens, so a proactive spring recovery plan—incorporating light topdressing, targeted fertility, and overseeding—is essential.

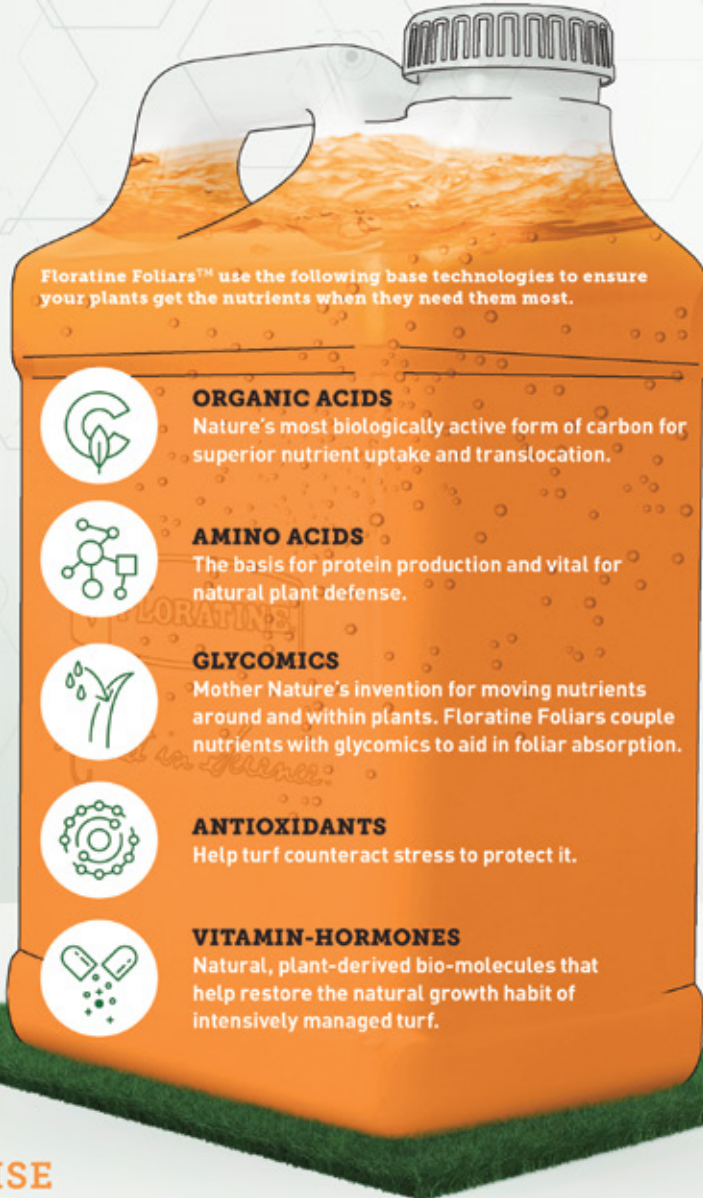
In the end, winter sand topdressing does not align well with the realities of our environment or management approach at Meadow Lark Country Club. Greater success comes from precise fall timing, active moisture management, thoughtful traffic distribution during winter play, and preparing for efficient spring recovery. These practices have proven to be more reliable in maintaining healthy, resilient greens through the challenges of a Montana winter.

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From Gym to Greens

Boz Backen, Assistant Superintendent, Golf Club at Devils Tower, Hulett, WY



My journey in the golf course industry began in 2007, shortly after graduating high school, when I started working at The Golf Club at Devils Tower. At the time, Rod Allen served as superintendent and played a major role in introducing me to the profession. His leadership and passion for the work sparked an interest that has stayed with me ever since.

Each summer, I returned to the club while pursuing my education. In 2012, I graduated college with a bachelor's degree in physical education. Unsure of my long-term path, I returned to the golf club full time before accepting a position as a physical education teacher in 2015.

Ten years later, an unexpected opportunity brought me back to where it all began. While working at the school, I received a call from Shawn Stutzman asking if I would be interested in returning to The Golf Club at Devils Tower as assistant superintendent. It was an opportunity I could not pass up.

Returning full time after years of seasonal work was both exciting and challenging. I had gone from spending only two to three months each year at the club to now being involved year-round. On my first day back, I was eager to get started, but I quickly realized we were stepping into three major projects: construction of a brand-new driving range, installation of a modern two-wire irrigation system, and development of a new

six-hole short course.

For anyone passionate about turf management, it was an ideal way to begin. I had the chance to participate in a grow-in process, learn advanced irrigation technology, and gain hands-on experience in golf course construction.

One of the most valuable learning experiences came with the new 13-acre driving range irrigation system. Our existing golf course used a traditional system, where each sprinkler head had its own individual wire. The new range, however, utilized a two-wire system. I expected a steep learning curve, but the installation process proved surprisingly efficient and straightforward. Once the heads were installed, I had the opportunity to work alongside our Rain Bird representative to program each head into the computer system and create detailed mapping through CirrusPRO software.

The grow-in of the new range was another rewarding process. With the help of a local farmer, we broadcast seeded the area using Buffalo Brand seed, a blend of Kentucky blue

continued page 14

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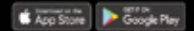
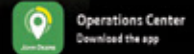
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Gym to Greens

continued from page 12

grass and perennial ryegrass. Within weeks, the ryegrass began emerging, followed soon after by the Kentucky bluegrass. Today, approximately 90 percent of the range is covered with quality turf, with plans to reseed select areas this summer for full establishment.

The final major project involved constructing six new bentgrass greens for the upcoming short course. Shawn and I



mapped the green locations and began excavating each site, removing 10 to 12 inches of topsoil. Several greens required shaping and elevation changes to fit the surrounding landscape.

From there, we installed drainage systems and laid approximately four inches of gravel, followed by four to six inches of sand. To finish the profile, we incorporated aeration cores from our spring aeration, adding valuable organic matter to the surface. The greens have now been seeded and rolled, and we are eager to watch them mature over the coming months.

In addition to the hands-on experience, attending GCSA conferences such as Peaks & Prairies and Rocky Mountain, along with utilizing the organization's online Learning Hub, has played a major role in furthering my education. The opportunity



Left - Old Driving Range, Above - New Driving Range

to learn from industry leaders, explore new technology, and continue developing professionally has been invaluable. I would strongly recommend these resources to anyone new to the industry who wants to expand their knowledge and build a successful career.

I could not have asked for a better return to the industry. Being involved in three significant projects right away has expanded my knowledge, sharpened my skills, and deepened my appreciation for the profession. From irrigation and grow-ins to green construction, each experience has strengthened my commitment to improving the property—not only for the golfers who enjoy it, but for the ownership and future of the club as well.



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Beyond the Greens

Justin Frederick, MBA, La Grande Country Club,
LaGrande, Oregon *IEGCSA Turf's Up, Spring 2026*



In today's digital world, social media has become far more than a place to share photos—it's a platform to build identity, tell stories, and connect with a wider community. For golf course maintenance teams, it offers a unique opportunity to step out from behind the scenes and into the spotlight. That's exactly what Grounds Crew Mafia is doing: turning everyday course maintenance into a compelling brand that engages members and attracts new interest.

Traditionally, the work of a grounds crew has gone largely unnoticed. Golfers enjoy pristine greens, striped fairways, and perfectly edged bunkers without fully understanding the expertise and effort required to maintain them. Through social media, Grounds Crew Mafia brings that process to life. By sharing videos of mowing patterns, course setup, irrigation strategies, and seasonal challenges, the team showcases the skill and precision behind every detail. This kind of content not only educates viewers but also builds a deeper appreciation for the course itself.

What sets Grounds Crew Mafia apart is its identity. The name alone creates intrigue and a sense of camaraderie, turning a maintenance crew into a recognizable and relatable brand. Social media allows that identity to grow through humor, behind-the-scenes moments, and team highlights. Featuring crew members, sharing their personalities, and documenting the daily grind helps humanize the operation. Members begin to recognize the faces behind the work, creating a stronger connection and sense of community.

Another major advantage is improved communication. Golf course conditions are always evolving due to weather, maintenance practices, and long-term improvements. Grounds Crew Mafia uses its platform to keep members informed—whether

it's explaining why greens are being aerated, why certain areas are temporarily closed, or how current work will improve play in the future. This level of transparency helps shift the narrative from confusion or frustration to understanding and support.

Engagement is where social media truly shines. Grounds Crew Mafia can interact directly with members through comments, polls, and Q&A sessions. Whether asking for input on course changes or simply responding to feedback, this two-way communication builds trust and loyalty. Members feel like they're part of the process rather than just spectators.

Consistency and authenticity are key to success. Grounds Crew Mafia doesn't need overly polished content—what resonates most is real, day-to-day storytelling. A quick clip of rolling greens before a big event or a snapshot of frost delays can be just as impactful as a professionally edited video. The goal is to stay consistent, stay genuine, and let the work speak for itself.

In the end, Grounds Crew Mafia represents more than just a social media page—it's a shift in how golf course maintenance is perceived. By embracing digital platforms, the team is building pride, strengthening relationships with members, and creating a brand that reaches far beyond the course. It's proof that with the right approach, even the most behind-the-scenes roles can take center stage and make a lasting impression.

Looking back, I am proud of the path that has brought me from the forest of my past to the fairways I care for today. I'm grateful to be part of the Idaho golf community and excited to continue growing in a profession that I truly love.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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babuttner@vailresorts.com

Judge Netting Mountain West
Riley Dabling
2904 South 2000 West
Syracuse, UT 84075
(801) 589-9450
riley@jn-mw.com

Steven Wilkins
Rochelle Ranch
814 Nieman St
Rawlins, WY 82301
(307) 321-6105
wilkinssteve80@gmail.com

Our year began April 1—still early in the year
to add staff as a member!



The Morning Lap

Brandon Barkley

The Club at 3 Creek, Jackson, Wyo.

There is a lot of information in our industry—conferences, webinars, magazine articles, and research-based reports. It all has value. But some of the most useful things that I have learned did not come from a classroom, publication, or a screen. They came from tagging along with another superintendent as they took their morning lap.

In one form or another, we all have a “morning lap.” For some of us, it may be working alongside the team as you collectively prep the course. For others, it may take the form of managing employees. Regardless, riding alongside a colleague for a few hours as they navigate the start of their day—with no real agenda, just observation and conversation—is how I have picked up countless pieces of information. At the start of spring, I had the opportunity to take a morning lap with long-time superintendent Doug Norwell of The Camargo Club. Doug’s fingerprints are clearly everywhere on the 100-year gem of a golf course. These are a few of my takeaways and how I found value in seeing an operation from a different angle.

Seeing a Different Operation

Every golf course is different, but the challenges are often the same. Staffing, weather, and equipment are a few of the common threads that bind all of us. The difference is how each operation handles those variables. On a morning lap, you see decisions and careful forethought in real time. You notice how a crew is deployed, who goes where, and how they execute similar tasks—what gets prioritized and what does not. Finding familiar patterns and differences in priorities gave me the biggest takeaway. It was not something new; it was confirmation that what we are all doing is not that different. The real art is finding what works uniquely for the team and resources that you have. At the end of the day, we all share the same challenges and are trying to achieve the same results.

Small Things Add Up

The small details of a property are what make it great in its own way. It is never about the budget—that is generally the obvious part. It is more about how the resources that are available are being used. Maybe it is how the shop is assembled or the uniqueness of the crew. I have always found the diversity of a golf course maintenance team to be fascinating. There are often no game-changing or new ideas. Observing and adopting

continued page 18



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Morning Lap continued from page 16

small details of how another operation achieves the same tasks has allowed me to shape the efficiency of my own team. Not a complete overhaul, but small compounding improvements over time.

Stepping Outside Your Own Routine

As golf course managers, we are often creatures of habit. It is easy to get locked into our own operation and our ways of doing things. Consistency is important, but it can also create blind spots. A morning lap forces you to step outside of that. You see a different pace, different approaches, and different priorities. You won't adopt everything you see, but it can challenge what you have been doing and make you think about why you do things the way you do. Rethinking or reaffirming your own operations is always a good use of time.

Making the Time

The biggest obstacle is usually time; I never personally have enough of it. Finding a few hours in the early morning is much easier in the golf industry than in others. I couldn't imagine many other professions that would allow you to join them for their 6 a.m. morning routine. If you're traveling, visiting family, or even just passing through another region, reach out. I've found superintendents to be a welcoming bunch. If timing does not work, that is fine too. The point is not to force it—it is to look for opportunities when they make sense.

Building Relationships That Matter

There is also the networking side to it. The golf industry is smaller than it seems. Relationships that you build locally or while traveling can become long-term resources, people you can call when you are needing a sounding board, considering a project or purchase, or just looking for another perspective.

Bring It Back Home

At the end of the day, the goal is not to copy another operation. It is to find something that improves your own. Find what fits your course, your budget, and your team. Sometimes the most valuable thing you can do is to see how someone else steers their ship and bring the best of it back home.



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Growing Forward: Why Professional Development Matters at Every Level

David Phipps, GCSAA, NW Representative

In this industry, it's easy to get comfortable. The days are full, the work is demanding, and the

routine can feel familiar. But real, meaningful growth rarely happens in comfort. It happens when we challenge ourselves to learn more, to do more, and to become more than we were yesterday.

Professional development isn't just about adding letters after your name. Whether you're an assistant superintendent pursuing the Assistant Superintendent Certificate Series (ASCS), an equipment technician working through the Equipment Manager Certificate Program (EMCP) and Certified Turf Equipment Manager (CTEM), or a superintendent aiming for the Certified Golf Course Superintendent (CGCS), these programs represent something deeper: a commitment to growth, discipline, and pride in your craft. And that commitment doesn't stay confined to the workplace.

At first glance, professional certifications can seem like a career move, and they are. They can open doors, build credibility, and set you apart in a competitive field. But the real value goes beyond promotions or resumes.

When you commit to a program like ASCS, EMCP, CTEM, or CGCS, you're building three important habits. The first habit is discipline. Discipline allows you to accomplish your goals by balancing your work, studies, and life. The second habit is resilience. You are learning how to push yourself through to completion, even when it is easier to stop. The third and final habit is confidence. This is obtained by simply knowing that you've earned your expertise.

Those same habits carry into your personal life. You become more organized, more intentional with your time, and more confident in tackling challenges outside of work. Growth in one area has a way of spilling into everything else.

Not everyone begins with a major certification, and they shouldn't have to. Encouraging staff members to pursue the GCSAA Greenkeeper Certificate can be a powerful first step. For many, it may be the first time they see a clear pathway for advancement. They will receive recognition for their effort and will gain a deeper understanding of their role in your organization.

That sense of progress matters. Job satisfaction often starts with feeling like you're moving forward. When someone earns that first certificate, it can shift their mindset from "this is just a job" to "this is a career I can build."

None of this happens in a vacuum. Behind every professional who takes that step forward, there's often someone who

"At the end of the day, these programs aren't just about achievement; they're about transformation."

encourages them to try. As mentors, leaders, and peers, we have more influence than we realize.

Encouraging professional development doesn't require big speeches. It can be as simple as recognizing someone's potential before they see it themselves. Or, sharing your own journey, including the struggles as well as your successes. Either way, when you create a space for learning and support, you will be on your way to celebrating their milestones, no matter how small. Sometimes people hesitate not because they lack ability, but because they lack belief. A few words of encouragement at the right time can be the push that changes a career.

When a team embraces development, something bigger happens. Growth becomes contagious. When an assistant works toward their ASCS, it'll inspire another to start as well. When an equipment tech begins pursuing their CTEM, it raises the standard in the shop and inspires others to do the same. Equally, when a superintendent earns their CGCS, it sets the tone for the entire operation. Quoting a previous GCSAA CEO, Steve Mona always said, "A rising tide floats all boats."

Over time, you don't just have a staff, you have a team of professionals who take pride in what they do and where they're going.

At the end of the day, these programs aren't just about achievement; they're about transformation.

They challenge you to think differently, to lead better, and to take ownership of your future. And in doing so, they shape not only your career, but your confidence, your mindset, and your life outside of work.

Growth is a choice. It's not always easy, and it's rarely convenient. But it's always worth it.

So, whether you're considering your next step or encouraging someone else to take theirs, remember this: the journey matters just as much as the destination, and it starts with a single decision to move forward.

Today, the value of a GCSAA membership could not be higher. There are opportunities for professional growth across every aspect of our membership. Whether you're a student, a crew member, an EM, an assistant, or a superintendent, there's a program to help you elevate your career.



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