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# **Successfully Facing the Challenges of a Modern Golf Course Assistant Superintendent**

Jared Nemitz

Senior Assistant Golf Course Superintendent,  
The Ford Plantation Golf Club

# Brief Bio

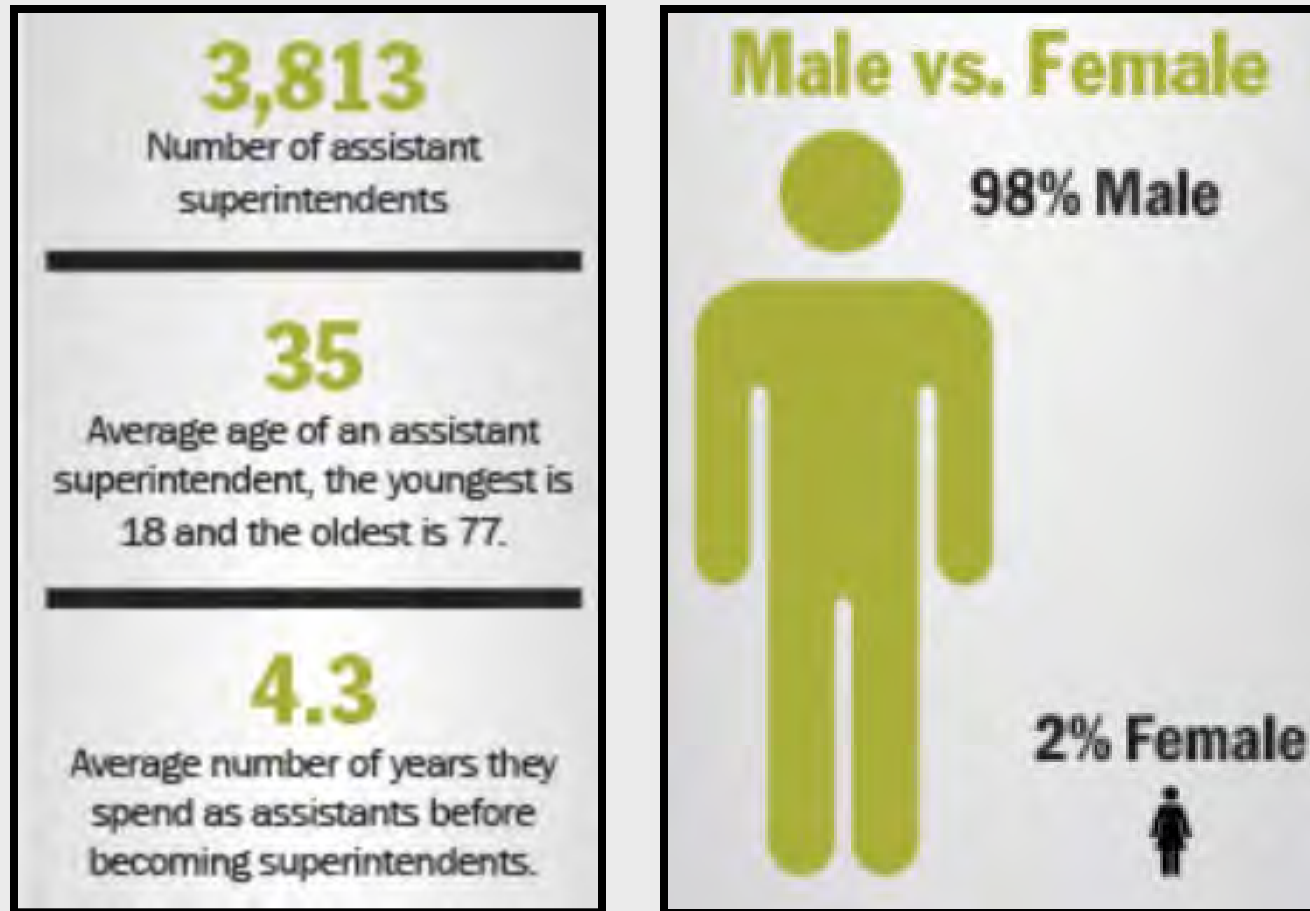
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- Senior AGCS
  - The Ford Plantation Golf Club
  - Savannah, GA
  - 4 years
- Earned Bachelors and Masters from Purdue
- Interned/Worked:
  - St. Andrews Links and Trust
  - The Chevy Chase Club, DC
  - The Honors Course, TN
  - The Kampen Course, IN



# The Modern Assistant

- Some fact & figures about asst. superintendents





# The Modern Assistant

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- Staying in positions longer
  - No longer the “3 and Done” philosophy (if it existed)
  - > 5 years
- Innovative
- Technological
- Highly trained
- Prepared
- Some have high expectations



# The Modern Assistant

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- Good pay:
  - > increase than super (GCSAA Compensation Report.2012)
  - 2.8% vs 2.7%
- Challenge to keep positive
  - Many colleagues getting out of industry
- Constantly trying to separate themselves

# THROUGH THE GREEN

Life in the  
Slow Lane

Time  
Stands  
Still for  
Many  
Assistants



“Judging from the feeling at meetings and events, there’s an underlying frustration among assistant superintendents who feel that’s it’s a pretty desolate picture out there. Let’s face it. No one went to turf school to be an assistant.” – Lydell Mack

**Marking Time. Asst. Superintendent Caught in a Traffic Jam.  
Through the Green. August 2012.**

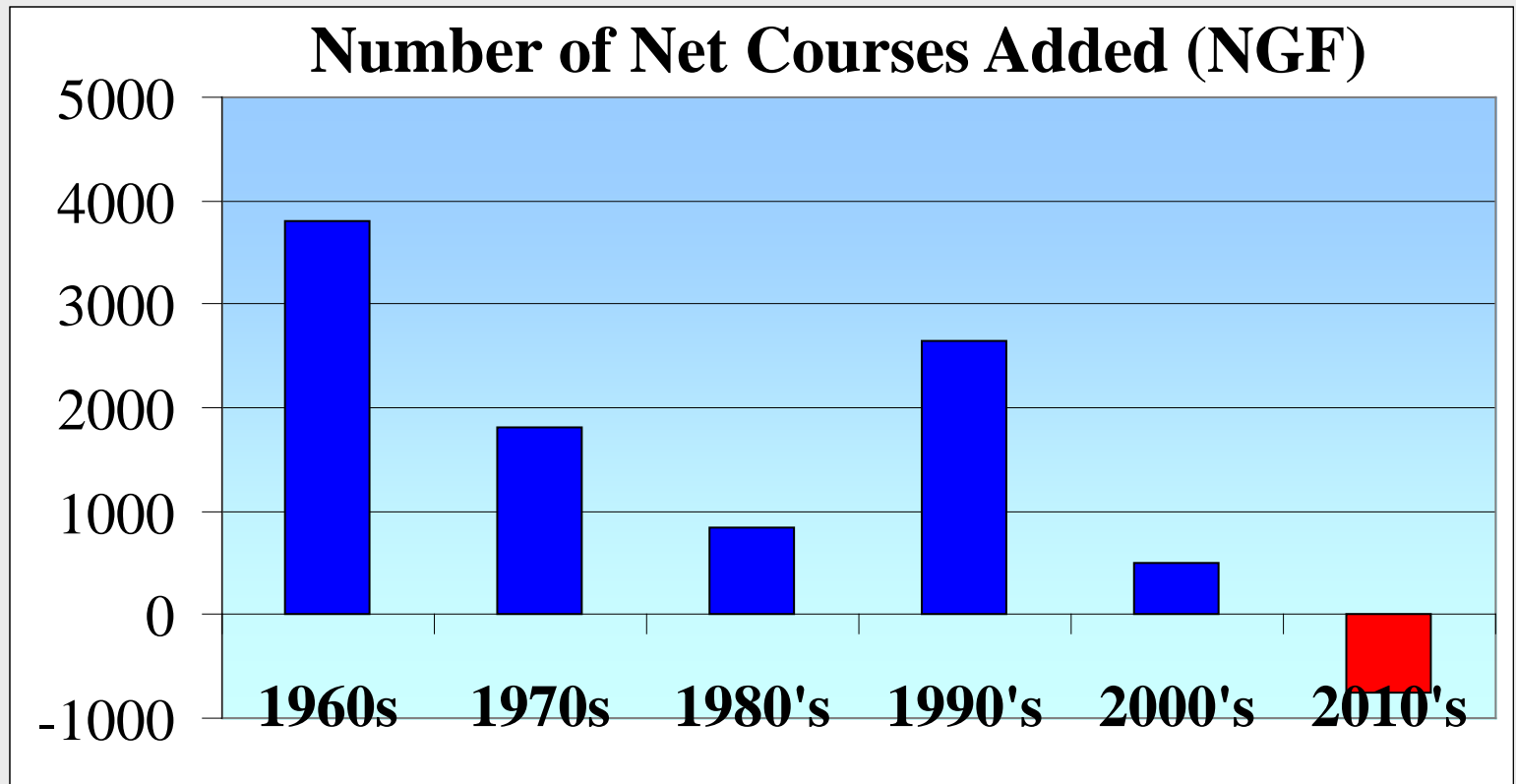


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# **What Are Some of The Challenges?**

# What Are The Challenges?

- Economy/Recession
- Golf booms





# What Are the Challenges

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## ○ Superintendent Trends

|      | Age of Superintendent | Years in Current Position | Total Years as Super | Planned Retirement Age |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2011 | 45                    | 9.5                       | 14.7                 | 64.4                   |
| 2009 | 44                    | 8.5                       | 13.5                 | 64                     |
| 2007 | 43.5                  | 8.8                       | 13.5                 | 63                     |
| 2005 | 42                    | 8                         | 13                   | NA                     |
| 2003 | 43                    | 8                         | 12                   | NA                     |

# What Are the Challenges

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# What Are the Challenges

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- Superintendent trends

|      | Age of Superintendent | Years in Current Position | Total Years as Super | Planned Retirement Age |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2011 | 45<br>+1.5            | 9.5                       | 14.7<br>+1.2         | 64.4<br>+1.4           |
| 2009 | 44                    | 8.5                       | 13.5                 | 64                     |
| 2007 | 43.5                  | 8.8                       | 13.5                 | 63                     |
| 2005 | 42                    | 8                         | 13                   | NA                     |
| 2003 | 43                    | 8                         | 12                   | NA                     |

# What Are The Challenges

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- Other assistants
- Number of résumés received for given job
- More assistant opportunities than superintendent opportunities





# What Are The Challenges?

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- Golf industry has buffered the transition of students to “assistant” positions by creating multiple positions
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, AIT, Spray Tech, Turf Graduate
  - Making room for the surplus of qualified individuals
- Clubs getting smart about retention
  - Increased wages, difficult to move laterally or down some times



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**What Are Some Things Assistants  
Can Do to Overcome These  
Challenges?**



# Gotta Have Goals

- Be specific in your desires
- Tough right now, but don't have to change goals
  - May have to change the path (lateral moves?)
  - Many do though
    - Career change



# Gotta Have the “Basics”

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- Résumé
  - Used to be all you needed
- Portfolio
  - Becoming more important, especially for superintendents
  - Required for certification process (CGCS)
- Website
  - Common as résumés...



# Résumé Hints

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- Keep updated and ready
- Information that qualifies and provides information YOU ABSOLUTELY WANT the search committee to see and read
- Make it stand alone from portfolio
- Don't have same information in portfolio as résumé
- USE THE GCSAA → They will proofread and review for free!



# Portfolio Information

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- Expand on Resume
- What to include?
  - Work philosophy or mission statement
  - Career goals
  - Tournament experience
  - Career highlights
  - References, letters of recommendations
  - Community leadership
  - and involvement
- Employee training plan
- Environmental stewardship
- Communication about your golf course
- Oral presentations
- Certificates, degrees, honors and awards
- Professional memberships



# Portfolio Information

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- Hints I have received on what not to include:
  - Don't get too personal
  - Family information, hobbies, likes, dislikes . . . Don't know who is reading!
- Don't get too wordy
  - Pictures are great
  - Text boxes
- Be careful of size of document/information
  - Too much can be overwhelming, confusing, contradicting

# Portfolio

## THE FORD PLANTATION:

### BEFORE AND AFTER

When I arrived at The Ford Plantation Golf Club to assume my current position, I was faced with tremendous agronomic challenges. The photographs below on the left were taken on the first day of my employment. The photos on the right represent total turfgrass recovery after executing a short, medium and long range detailed agronomic plan.



Total turfgrass failure on a Ford Plantation fairway.



Complete turfgrass recovery due to smart, scientific, agronomic practices.



After strategic planning, The Ford Plantation members enjoy "world-class" putting greens.



Total turfgrass failure on a Ford Plantation fairway.



Complete turfgrass recovery due to smart, scientific, agronomic practices.

## A Portfolio of a Golf Business Professional

Jared R. Nemitz, AGCS





# Putting Greens

## PUTTING GREEN SURFACE MANAGEMENT

Putting greens are the most important aspect to any golf course and the greens at the Ford Plantation are no exception. We strive to have the best greens that provide the highest quality playing surfaces to the golfer. The putting green surface management program that I have been instrumental in creating at the Ford Plantation is one of precision and high quality.

### The Ford Plantation USGA TAS Visit



### Putting Greens

- The TifEagle putting greens at Ford Plantation are the finest ultra dwarf putting surfaces in the world.
- The surface management programs underway are enacted under the famous philosophy discovered by Mr. Rodney Lingle at Memphis Country Club.
- This is the third season this program has been underway.
- Mowing heights are now the lowest ever at 0.040 inch compared to 0.060 inch last summer.
- Green speeds are achieved at 15 feet on the Stimpmeter.



### Putting Green Expectations



### Testimonials: USGA Turf Advisory Reports

### TifEagle Putting Greens



Below is an excerpt from a regional turf advisory visit (TAS) conducted by Patrick O'Brien.



The Ford Plantation  
Turfgrass Advisory Visit  
September 23, 2010  
Page 3

The maintenance staff at The Ford Plantation are the premier experts in TifEagle putting green surface management. The putting greens at The Ford Plantation are the best in the southern USA and maybe the world.

### Putting Greens

#### Observations

The TifEagle putting greens are now the finest playing surfaces that I visit annually in the Carolinas and Georgia. I have never observed finer ultra dwarf putting quality than at The Ford Plantation due to the management programs of Mr. Caron.

TifEagle green speeds the day of my visit were at approximately 14 feet and 6 inches. I have never seen faster green speeds ever in my 30 plus career with the USGA Green Section. It is remarkable to think back in 1977 when the USGA first took stimpmeter readings at courses that the average speed was at 6 feet! I have emailed the original set of stimpmeter data taken throughout the USA by USGA agronomists for everyone to view the results and see what green speeds use to be at.

The surface management practices underway that include sand topdressing, verticutting, brushing, turf grooming, and tight mowing are all blended to perfection at The Ford Plantation. I don't know of any other golf course maintenance staff in the southern USA that does this grooming system any better.

# Website-Part of Your Portfolio

Jared R. Nemitz

Senior Assistant Golf Course Superintendent

[www.webstarts.com](http://www.webstarts.com)

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*"Manager, Teacher, Leader and Agronomist"*

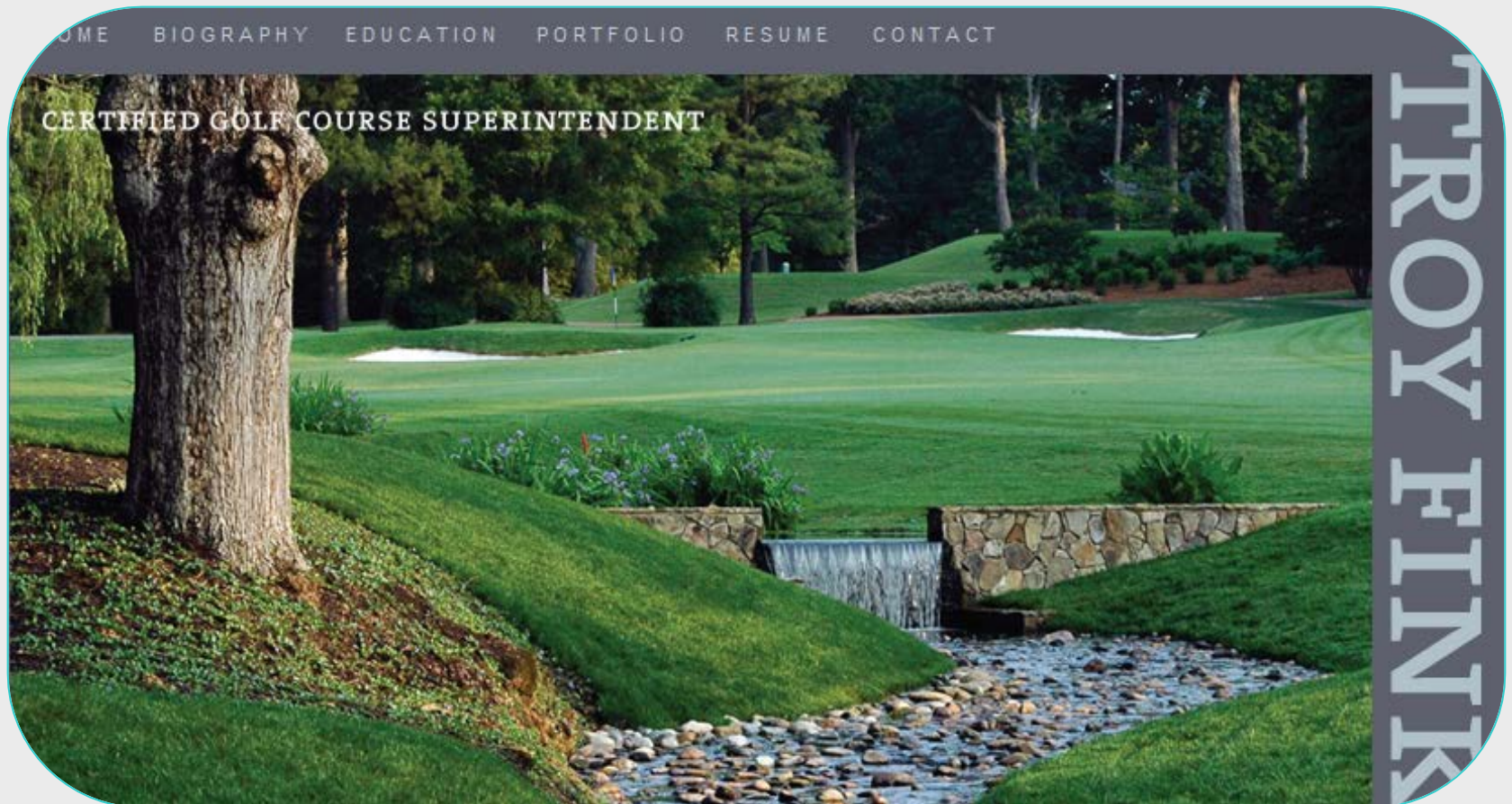




# Website-Part of Your Portfolio

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- [www.GoPlayBooks.com](http://www.GoPlayBooks.com)
- Great company that centers around golf course industry



# Other Things To Do

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- Push yourself at your job
- Have to have a reason to come to work
- If you are satisfied:
  - With what you know
  - How you are doing it
  - Status quo
- Challenge yourself-Reinvent Yourself
  - Many ways of doing this

**In Trouble!**



## Other Things to Do

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- Ask for SUPPORT of superintendent
- The superintendent holds the keys to **many** of your opportunities
  - It helps immensely to have them on board
  - But the boss has to have TRUST in YOU!
- Attend and present at green/board committee meetings
- On site golf course tours

**ASK, DON'T WAIT!**



## Other Things To Do!

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- Any other thing to separate or get your name out there
  - Join assistant association or volunteer in regional chapter (create it)
  - Attend field days, webinars etc.
  - Write an article, present a topic national/chapter
- Make members or people that play at your golf course aware of job hunt possibility
  - Use caution

# Other Things To Do!

- Make yourself “available”

- When important people are around

- Make yourself memorable

- Those who are not visible are nothing

**BE VISIBLE AND BE VALUABLE!**







## **Use Social Media**

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- Multiple seminars here at GCSAA on this very topic
- Whether we like it or not, the use of social media is everywhere
- It is a great tool to keep in contact and build relationships

# Golf Course Blogging

- Set one up
- Volunteer to run it
- Promote the course and yourself
- Don't know who will see it

## The Ford Plantation Agronomy Department



MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2010

### Useful Links

[Ford Plantation](#)  
[GCSAA](#)  
[GGCSA](#)  
[USGA](#)  
[Turfgrass Disease Update](#)  
[30 Day Weather](#)  
[GA Climate Data](#)

### [The Pete Dye Internship Program to New Heights!](#)

For the last two years, The Ford Plantation Golf Maintenance Department has been operating The Pete Dye Agronomic Scholarship program. This is a developmental internship program for young professionals with a passion for golf course maintenance.

### About Me

NELSON CARON

[View my complete profile](#)

### Nelson Caron



Director of Golf Course Maintenance

### Jared Nemitz



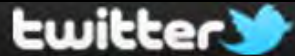
Assistant Golf Course Superintendent



Figure 1-2. Interns take part in all facets of golf course maintenance including irrigation break repairs and chemical applications.

In December The Ford Plantation and the Savannah Community Foundation have teamed up to make the newly named Pete Dye Internship a 501(c)(3) tax deductible donation. Professors from leading turfgrass universities (Georgia, Penn State, Purdue, Clemson, North Carolina State and Florida) will submit up to two nominees for the internship/scholarship program. Nelson Caron and CW Canfield will submit these names to the Pete Dye Scholarship Committee comprised of Mike Killian, Steve Rabinowitz and Dr. Bill Thompson. Selected golf course interns will receive a scholarship to be used for educational expenses. Along with this scholarship they will also receive an hourly wage for the duration of the 3 month internship. Free housing, competitive wages and scholarship makes the Pete Dye Internship one of the most sought after internships in the country.

# Twitter



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## Jared

**@JaredNemitz** Savannah, GA

*Assistant G.C. Superintendent at The Ford Plantation Golf Club.*

<http://jarednemitz.com>

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**JaredNemitz** Jared

Considering turfgrass covers tomorrow evening. First time this year.

16 seconds ago



About @JaredNemitz

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Tweets

**42**

Following

**32**

Followers

Following **42**



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West Coast Turf-AZ



**MarcKovach**  
Marc Kovach



# Finally

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## ○ **Develop & Build Relationships**

- Arguably one of most important things to do
- “Not what you know...It’s who you know”
- Industry, green committee, general managers

## ○ **Nurture those relationships**

- Emails, calls, texts
  - Exchange of information
  - Follow ups
- “Networking is a business cliché’, it’s important to think about it in terms of relationships and camaraderie for both professional and personal development.”-Bob Farren, CGCS



# Take Home Message

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- Assistants face many challenges
- Must have a plan to overcome
  - Challenge yourself
- Get yourself out there!
- Network, build relationships
- When in doubt, learn from the past...

# The Changing Of The Guard

by Robert M. Williams  
Superintendent  
Bob O'Link Golf Club  
Highland Park, Illinois

Today's superintendent is better qualified, more talented, more articulate, more efficient and produces better results than ever before. But his club cannot afford to pay him what he is worth.

Part of the reason for this is that times and trends are changing. First, the superintendent is much younger. There are only a handful of active superintendents today who are 60 or older. In fact, there are relatively few in their 40s or 50s. Most are in the 25 to 35 age bracket.

Next, today's superintendent has a better technical and general education. The majority of the "new breed" are graduates of university programs such as Penn State, Michigan State, Purdue, Rutgers and others. In addition to these fine programs, many community colleges are getting more active in turfgrass management training. In line with his better education, today's superintendent is demonstrating better business management practices and executive ability. More records are being kept, more attention is given to costs, budgeting and prudent purchasing.

We also find today's superintendent doing a much better job of communication, both with his fellow superintendents and with his club officials and the golfers.

Let us look at the salary scale. Salaries are barely keeping up with the rate of inflation. With an annual inflation rate of over five percent in recent years, salary levels should have about doubled in the past 15 years, just to keep abreast and with no allowance for merit raises. I recall a salary survey made in about 1960. It found at that time that the range of superintendents in our area was from \$10,000 to \$18,000, with a median of about \$12,000. Today, 15 years later, my sampling of the same superintendents indicates we are

generally in the \$15,000 to \$30,000 bracket with a median of about \$20,000.

Quite a number of superintendents are now engaged in outside business ventures such as landscaping to supplement their income. Most of the superintendents I know that do this do so with the approval of their clubs and officials.

In addition to the salary situation, fringe benefits have not kept pace over the years. For instance, surprisingly few clubs have retirement programs. I believe we have to place a good deal of the blame here on ourselves, along with the club managers and the club pros. We have not done a good enough job of selling the need for programs of retirement, medical benefits, hospitalization, life insurance, business expenses, transportation, etc.

We must also take note of the decisions being made by our clubs when they find it necessary to replace their superintendents. Generally speaking, clubs are bypassing consideration of experienced superintendents in favor of young relative newcomers to the profession. This indicates that club officials are attempting to save dollars. Personally, I am pleased to see these young men being placed in responsible positions for their own personal welfare, but at the same time I am concerned by the fact that some clubs are paying more attention to the price of a new superintendent, than they are towards his qualifications and proven ability.

Perhaps the most significant factor affecting the superintendent's position today is the state of the economy. Membership waiting lists are shrinking or wanting. Dues and costs are up, business expenses have been curtailed, the stock market is down and all of these factors hurt club activity and income. Undoubtedly we will see more belt-tightening by the clubs for this year and possibly even longer.

As we look into the future of our

profession, we have to be aware of the old factor of supply and demand. Are we training enough or too many new men for the field? The National Golf Foundation tells us that we constructing about 200 new courses a year, at this time, which is a slowdown compared to the average for the last 10 years. Not all of these would require new superintendents because some are additions to existing facilities. In addition to new positions at new courses, we will have to replace those superintendents who leave the profession. Based on GCSAA figures, a projection of the entire field would mean a loss of some 120 men annually. So, between the new jobs and the replacements, we would estimate a demand for about 350 new superintendents a year.

How many new men are we training? Dr. William Daniel of Purdue University recently said that he surveyed 56 schools and came up with a total enrollment of about 1,160 turfgrass students, with 445 graduates last June. Some of these students will end up as commercial representatives, researchers and teachers. Some others will leave the profession. Also, we will have additional men who will come into the field without formal university training. All in all, it appears we are currently training about 500 men annually for about 300 to 500 jobs.

It seems to me that we are just about keeping pace with supply and demand at this time. However, the GCSAA and the schools will need to keep up a liaison so graduating students will not be disappointed in job opportunities. The GCSAA scholarship program has been active in providing funds to encourage and assist students in turfgrass management, about \$20,000 a year. Here too, prudent planning for the future is definitely needed.

In summary, I believe we must keep alert to changing times and make adjustments accordingly. Additionally, industry and research has played a terrific role in upgrading our profession and maintenance standards for golfers. The sophistication of our modern tools, particularly automatic irrigation and mowers, has given us a whole new ballgame. Advancement in research is also developing new horizons in the use of chemical controls for plant growth.

Robert Williams. Golfdom Magazine. March 1975

"The National Golf Foundation tells us that we are constructing about 200 new courses a year, at this time, which is a slowdown compared to the last 10 years."

"...training about 500 people annually for 300-500 jobs."

"...the GCSAA and schools will need to keep up a liaison so graduating students will not be disappointed in job opportunities."



# Thank You!

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