



# The President's Perspective

**Victor Heitkamp**  
**Osgood Golf Course**  
**Fargo Park District**  
**NCTGA President**

Greeting NCTGA members, I would like to first take this opportunity to thank the board of directors and you, the members, for giving me the privilege to serve as your president. It is with great honor I accept the chance to keep working with you and continue the momentum we have seen over the last few years.

I would like to extend a special thank you to our former president, Aaron Motl. Your rein as president is appreciated by us all, and you are leaving some big shoes for me to fill. It's a good thing for me that you have one year left of your current term. I would also like to give a mention and thank you to our returning board members, Vice President Gordy Flesberg and Directors Melissa Grafenauer and Cammi Campbell, and newly elected board members, Treasury/Secretary Dave Wood and Directors Kevin Gruber, Alex Orr, and Garrett Schultz. We are all excited to have the chance to serve as your board of directors.

I would also like to thank all the board members who have served in the past, and a special thanks to the four directors who went off this past year, Vice President Craig Vigen and Directors Dave Bietz, Kyle Fick and Aaron Johnson. Your time and commitment to the NCTGA is appreciated and you will be missed.

Our 2017 conference and trade show was held this past Feb/March and on behalf of the board I say thank you to all the speakers, vendors, and members who made this a great week. As a board we work hard to bring you the best of the best and with your continued support we will continue to work and make future conferences just as great. The board does recognize that this year's conference had a few hiccups, and we are working with the Ramada to find a way to make things right. We are also exploring different venues to see if there is something else out there that may fit our needs. Our conference and trade show is an important part of our success and growth, not only as an organization, but as individuals

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It's a tool to connect with peers in our industry and learn what's what in the world of turf. Please contact Executive Director Rene Smith or a board member if you have any thoughts, concerns or ideas as we start the process of planning the 2018 conference and trade show. We are still working on finalizing the details for the 2017 golf tournament and will post the information on the web site when things are confirmed with the golf course. Stay tuned...

With that I will end with one final thought, spring has sprung, and schedules are getting crazy for many of us. Spring is my favorite time of year, from watching the flowers pop from the ground, trees starting to bud, the singing of birds, or the smell of nature starting to refresh itself from the death and decay of fall and winter with the timing of spring rains and the greening up of grass.

## Planning the work, and working the plan

It's a new year, and now is the time for planning. Whether you're creating plans from scratch or reviewing existing ones, the beginning of the year is a perfect time to be thinking about long- and short-term plans and goals. We're all familiar with long-range plans for golf courses that entail scheduled architectural changes or updates to the property. These usually serve as a road map for changes over a period of five to 20 years. Long-range plans can also be five- to 10-year capital plans that encompass equipment purchases, infrastructure improvements (such as maintenance facilities), and rebuilding bunkers, greens or tees. Short-term plans typically cover activities to be accomplished in, say, one to two years. These projects generally require less advance work to secure contractors, permits and approvals, and can often be done in-house.

For me it's Mother Nature's way to reenergize the rebirth of new growth. It won't be long and we will be in the full swing of summer. In closing my ending message for you is to remember to take some time and appreciate the little things.



The use of long-range plans frequently helps steer course changes along a path that takes into consideration the costs and how the work can best be funded over time. Incorporating financial planning into a long-range plan ensures that the focus will remain on the original objectives throughout the plan's life. A critical component of the success of long range projections for course modifications is selecting a capable golf course architect who is willing to commit the time and effort to fully understand the complicated world of member politics and ideas. The membership must be united in its desire for the future of the course to ensure a consistent product as the plan moves forward. When long-range plans fail or never reach completion, it's usually because this or another critical component has collapsed. Long-range capital equipment plans are often five to 10 years in length, but are more effective if they are set up as rotating long-range plans. Rotating long-range plans remove the current year from the mix and add another year at the end of the plan.

## Planning the work, and working the plan Continued

This creates a dynamic, flexible plan that is constantly evolving. Each current year then becomes a short-term plan with equipment, budgeting and timeline elements. Short-term planning is a great way to prepare for the coming season — to list what needs to be done and how you plan to do it. These types of plans include agronomic plans, staffing plans, application plans, project plans and just about anything else you can think of that you want to tackle in the coming year. Such plans can be expressed as a simple calendar or as a detailed agronomic plan that specifies a timeline, resources needed and budget information. You can employ short-term planning for course changes if the modifications are intended to improve agronomic success or playing quality, such as small irrigation tweaks or upgrades, drainage projects, or bunker rebuilding.

When these short-term projects begin to impact the character and playability of the course, it may be time to incorporate the concepts into a long-range plan to ensure the integrity of the course is maintained, or, in some cases, to demonstrate the need for more extensive renovations or updates. Often, superintendents brainstorm with their staff, green committee or managers about projects, ideas, concepts and schedules. By converting this brainstorming into a plan, you'll be better equipped later on to communicate the goals you want to achieve on both a short- and long-term basis. You can share the objectives and how you foresee reaching them with staff, members, committees or other individuals as necessary. You'll also have a document to refer to during the year or during work on a project that can keep you on track and help you easily incorporate adjustments along the way.

Roger Stewart, CGCS, is the director of golf course maintenance operations at TPC Twin Cities in Blaine, Minn.



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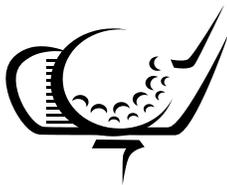
## **GOLF INC. NAMES NORBY'S COAL CREEK RUNNER-UP BEST REDEVELOPMENT OF 2016**

Coal Creek Golf Course in Louisville, Colorado has been named runner-up Best Redevelopment of 2016 by Golf Inc. magazine. The competition included golf course projects worldwide including Trump Turnberry in Scotland which nudged out Coal Creek for the top spot. These are not just course improvements, these are existing golf course developments that have been transformed by reconfiguring an existing course, rebranding or adding new elements such as housing.

Coal Creek Golf Course is an established daily fee course situated between Boulder and Denver in Louisville, Colorado. Owned and operated by the City of Louisville, this Eighteen hole public course was formerly home to numerous small claims coal mines prospected by area settlers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The golf course emerged as part of a residential housing development in 1990.

After nearly twenty-five years, the course had begun to show its age with drainage issues, contaminated bunkers, poor turf conditions and a failing irrigation system. In 2011, after conducting a national search, the City of Louisville selected Minnesota based golf architect Kevin Norby to complete a long-range master plan study for the golf course.

The City reviewed nearly every aspect of the course from conditioning and infrastructure to rate structure, management, and marketing. In the end, the master plan study identified the condition of the irrigation system and the negative impact that invasive trees were having on playability and conditioning as primary issues.



In September 2013, Mother Nature changed the City's plans when torrential rains flooded Boulder County and the City of Louisville. The resulting devastation left sixteen of Coal Creek's eighteen holes submerged with damage to cart paths, bridges, greens, tee, bunkers and the irrigation system.

With the golf course unplayable, the City made the decision to rebuild and, at the same time, implement many of the long-range master plan recommendations. The City hired Norby and Nebraska-based certified golf course contractor Landscapes Unlimited to reconstruct Coal Creek from top to bottom. Improvements included rebuilding all the greens, tees and bunkers as well as re-grassing the fairways and installing a new irrigation system. The design/build team also capitalized on this opportunity to add forward tees, increase the overall course yardage and address safety issues on the driving range and hole number four.

Norby stated that his goal was to "make the course more playable and more enjoyable for the masses while providing the strategy and challenge that the more skilled golfer would appreciate."

Those familiar with Colorado and the Denver market understand how integral biking is to the outdoor lifestyle of Colorado residents. As a result, Coal Creek introduced the pedal caddie to golfers in Louisville. The Peddle Caddie is a bicycle retrofitted to allow golfers to carry their clubs while they ride a bike. The bikes have large tires to minimize damage to the turf. The Peddle Caddies is one more way Coal Creek has differentiated itself in the local golf market."

One of the most significant improvements to the course involved the clearing and selective removal of scrub willow and "volunteer" cottonwood trees that had taken root along the stream corridors and pond edges.



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This removal not only improved pace of play and the playability of the course but, it also revealed portions of the creek that had probably not been seen for decades edges.

The greens were rebuilt and enlarged to incorporate dramatic contours and improve playability. At the par 3 fifth green, Norby incorporated a large swale running diagonally from front left to back right - a feature Norby termed a "mini Biarritz." Bunkers were renovated and re-positioned to better challenge the longer hitter while opening the landing areas for the average golfer. Norby preserved the original cape-and-bay style but reduced flashing and made the bunkers smaller to minimize erosion and ongoing maintenance.

The 2013 catastrophe also offered the City of Louisville an opportunity to implement many of the master plan recommendations pertaining to marketing and management.

The City hired a new superintendent, general manager and golf professional and embarked on a complete rebranding of the course to leverage their coal mining heritage. They created a new logo, scorecard layout, tee signage, tee markers and course signage.

Since re-opening its doors, Coal Creek has seen remarkable success. The course previously averaged less than 100 rounds per day. However, in the first five months of post-flood operation the course has averaged over 130 rounds daily with peak use over 200 rounds per day. Kevin Norby is the owner and senior designer at Herfort Norby Golf Course Architects. For more information, you may contact Kevin at (952)361-0644 or via email [knorby@HerfortNorbyGolf.com](mailto:knorby@HerfortNorbyGolf.com), [golfnorby@earthlink.net](mailto:golfnorby@earthlink.net), [www.herfortnorby.com](http://www.herfortnorby.com).

## George Toma

### Working Spring Training At Age 88

Written by Jim Steeg-NFL's Executive Vice President

At 5-foot-2, groundskeeper George Toma stands four and a half inches shorter than his golden rake. But the man, 88, looms large in sports. Toma has guided the grounds crew at all 51 Super Bowls. He has installed and maintained fields for the NFL in London, Barcelona, Tokyo and Mexico City among others cities worldwide. Toma casts a legacy in Lee County, too. During the 1970s and '80s at Terry Park in Fort Myers, Toma maintained the fields while working for the Kansas City Royals. For the past 17 spring training seasons, with no plans to stop, Toma has worked for Lee County and the Minnesota Twins at Hammond Stadium. Former Lee County director of parks and recreation John Yarbrough met Toma during his Royals tenure at Terry Park and found an opportunity to bring him back as an independent contractor in 2000. "To me, it meant that our workers, our ground maintenance staff, would be working with a legend. The legend," Yarbrough said. "The professionalism that he has, you can't get that anywhere. He's forgotten more than anybody knows. He's been at the Super Bowl longer than anybody in the NFL. "I think the opportunity to surround our staff with that kind of knowledge and experience is priceless." Lee County pays Toma \$7,800 for six weeks of many 12-hour days, which amounts to about \$15 an hour or \$1,300 a week. The average Lee County groundskeeper makes \$1,280.28, bi-weekly, about \$31,200 a year. The Minnesota Twins pay for Toma's spring training lodging, although he spends more time tending the fields than at a nearby hotel. "People think I'm a millionaire," said Toma, who spends most of the year in Westwood, Kansas, not far from Kansas City, Missouri, where he cuts the lawns of his senior citizen neighbors during the summertime for free. He said he never made more than \$50,000 a year when working full-time for the Kansas City Royals. "That's my own fault," Toma said. "I should have stuck up for myself. If I had never worked for the NFL, I never would have made things work for my family." Being underpaid might be Toma's only regret. He encouraged his three sons to abide by his motto of "And then some," a saying he cultivated to put forth additional effort in his endless pursuit of

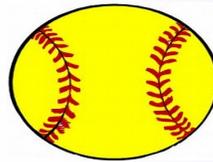
Now there's more than one Toma on the Lee County grounds crew. His oldest son, Chip Toma, 66, accepted a full-time job last summer at CenturyLink Sports Complex. He's in charge of Field Three on the minor league side and helps his dad during the big-league Twins games, when all hands are on deck. "He wants that minor league field to be a field like it is in the big leagues," George Toma said of Chip. Rick Toma, 52, is the chief operating officer of The Money Source, Inc., a bank specializing in mortgages. Ryan Toma, 33, works as a pilot for Delta Airlines. All three sons have served on Super Bowl crews with their dad at various times. "Oh no, I don't think any of us will retire per se," Rick Toma said. "There's such enjoyment in it. For some folks, if there's not enjoyment, they watch the clock. When you love what you do, time is not an element at all." Toma reports for duty in Fort Myers about 10 days after the Super Bowl. He departs after the last spring training game has been played. He doesn't delegate much, either. "I guess the secret to a long life is you get a nail board and walk the infield all the time," said Jim Steeg, who for 26 years worked for the NFL as an executive vice president, supervising the Super Bowl.

Although Steeg, 66, is 22 years younger than Toma, George and Chip Toma considered Steeg a father figure. "The group that works with him, they're a different type of people," Steeg said. "They're non-stop workers. They're the guys who put 16, 18 hours into a day. George is obviously the first to get there and the last to leave. There's not a job that happens with this that he doesn't do himself. If you're talking about dragging the infield or whatever, he's going to be out there doing it himself. "I think a lot of people admire that." Groundskeepers across Major League Baseball, the NFL and even in auto racing, revere George Toma, the trunk of a grounds keeper's tree that has grown many branches.

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## George Toma Working Spring Training at Age 88 continued

“Everyone gravitates to him, because he works so hard,” said Jim Leyland, a longtime major league and current manager of Team USA during the World Baseball Classic. He has known Toma since 1982. “If he was the groundskeeper, you never had to worry about the field. You knew it was going to be perfect.” Boston Red Sox head groundskeeper David Mellor, 53, said Toma has been a mentor and friend for 35 years. “My dream was to make it to the majors as a player,” Mellor said. “A month after I got out of college, I was hit by a car, not only was my leg crushed, I thought my dreams were crushed. So my family urged me to find a career I would love to do. “During a lot of that recovery, I thought about what I loved to do. I grew up taking care of people’s lawns, and I loved baseball. I wrote a letter to every major league groundskeeper.” Only five wrote back to Mellor. Toma’s letter arrived first. It was handwritten and 16 pages long, dated Thanksgiving Day of that year. Mellor treasures the letter. He has worked for the Brewers, Angels, Giants, Green Bay Packers and now the Red Sox at Fenway Park, meaning Toma’s influence has spread to those teams as well.



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## SLOW AND STEADY!

By Thomas A. Nikolai, Ph.D., "Doctor of Green Speed," Michigan State University

If you want to know how golf courses were managed 25 years ago, ask the USGA for a recommendation today" is a statement that has been attributed to golf course architect Pete Dye. I don't know whether Mr. Dye ever uttered those words, but I do know that when an audience of superintendents hears it, most chuckle and many nod in affirmation. The Scots invented golf and Scotch whisky — which can't be a coincidence — and they have happily exported the game to the farthest reaches of the world. However, Americans are the ones who sought to perfect playing conditions by initiating golf course research. This was a little bit of a sore spot for Sir Robert Greig, a Scottish agriculturalist and Secretary to the Department of Agriculture for Great Britain from 1928 to 1934. How far has research advanced the game? In 1929, Sir Robert wrote, "Times have changed, and a good player wants now to have a reasonable chance to hole a 10-foot putt, a feat which would have been pure fluke in earlier days." Please sit back and think about how much the game has changed in less than a century. He is talking about a 10-foot putt that is the same length today as it was in 1929. Sir Robert goes on to acknowledge the work of the USGA, which he refers to as both the Golfers' Research Association of America and the American Golfers' Research Association. "A considerable body of knowledge has been built up by the Golfers' Research Association of America. ... The first problem then is to get together the knowledge that does exist and make it available to all. The second problem is by scientific research to add to the existing knowledge and fill up the blanks in our ignorance. This is an operation that shall never cease, but there is no reason why it should never begin." As I stated, I don't know whether Pete Dye ever said that opening quotation, but if he did and if we laughed, it is because human nature asks us to want more. Today, we live in a world of instant information via the internet and mediums like Twitter, but a great deal of that information is not scientifically

Being steady, dependable and reliable are among the greatest of virtues, but they are not sexy, and during tough times, they can even be frustrating. Today, we live in a world of instant information via the internet and mediums like Twitter, but a great deal of that information is not scientifically tested or valid. The term "alternative facts" is currently in vogue, but there can only be one set of facts, so alternative facts are lies. As I have traveled the world, it has become apparent to me that the USGA is a true guardian of the game. Twenty-five years ago, the USGA was funding, among other things, lightweight rolling, TDR (time-domain reflectometry) and alternative depth root-zone research. Two of those have become common practices today, increasing customer satisfaction and decreasing disease and water inputs. The USGA has also supported numerous studies proving that many products and methods do not work as promised. Unlike short-term companies, the USGA is not concerned with trying to please everyone just to stay on top. The USGA is uncompromising and does not make uneducated, unsubstantiated or uncalculated recommendations, and this has led to the long-term success and advancement of the game. I believe Sir Robert's conclusion to his 1929 article rings as true now as it did then: "Judging from the success of the American Golfers' Research Association, the small subscriptions required of each club will be many times repaid by the additional pleasure which the game will give when played under better conditions. But golfers must be patient. They must not expect quick returns. Research is slow, but it is very sure, and it pays not in fives and tens but ultimately in hundreds and thousands per cent."



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### **Quote's of the Day**

It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop. Confucius

Accept the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of victory. George S. Patton

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. Benjamin Franklin

It took me seventeen years to get three thousand hits in baseball.

I did it in one afternoon on the golf course. ~ Hank Aaron

The reason the pro tells you to keep your head down is so you can't see him laughing.

~ Phyllis Diller

Of all the hazards, fear is the worst.

~ Sam Snead

Concentration comes out of a combination of confidence and hunger.

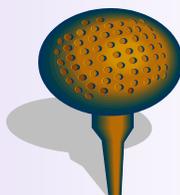
~ Arnold Palmer



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# Thank You!

# Where have all the students gone?

By Jack Fry, Ph.D. Director of the Rocky Ford Turfgrass Research Center at Kansas State University.

In 2001, student numbers in golf course and turfgrass management programs at land-grant universities across the nation were high, and many wondered where these students would find employment in a market so saturated. How things have changed. Now, low enrollment has the potential to create a crisis for golf courses seeking to hire superintendents — maybe not next year or 10 years from now, but eventually. At universities, we're concerned. Last November, turfgrass scientists gathered at a special teaching symposium as part of the Crop Science Society of America meetings in Phoenix to address enrollment issues in undergraduate programs. Between 1995 and 2001, enrollment in the golf course management program at Kansas State University tripled, and we had nearly 150 enrolled. However, we weren't the only ones seeing higher enrollment numbers, and several factors contributed to that: • Tiger Woods had reached superstardom, and his popularity attracted more people to the game. • Golf course construction was booming, and there was what seemed to be a reasonable, underlying assumption among the general public that the demand for qualified people to manage the facilities was going to rise. • Students seemed to like the idea of working outdoors. Now, at K-State, we're down to about 40 students in our turf curriculum, which includes students in both golf course and sports turf management. And compared with other programs, our numbers are pretty good. Other schools have experienced more dramatic drops in enrollment in turfgrass programs, and some whose numbers are in the single digits will cease to exist after current faculty leave or retire. Why this has happened is a subject of great debate, but it's likely that a combination of factors has been responsible. For example, golf has simply declined in popularity. The National Golf Foundation indicates there are now 6 million fewer golfers who play at least one round annually than there were in 2005. For many students, their initial interest in turfgrass starts with exposure to golf, so if fewer are introduced to the sport, enrollment in university turf programs will no doubt suffer. The number of golf courses in the U.S. has also outpaced demand for some time, and, as a result, more than 800 courses have closed in the past decade.

Fewer golf courses means fewer employers for turfgrass managers, and, consequently, employment in a golf-related profession may now be considered more passé to young people than it once was. Another issue is financial. With declining state support, tuition at publicly funded schools — where most turfgrass programs are housed — has risen much faster than the rate of inflation. The nature of the job itself is working against us too. Working outside in a profession that periodically requires getting one's hands dirty is generally less attractive to today's average high school graduate than it was even 10 years ago. Add all of that together, and it's getting harder for superintendents to find and hire degree-holding, full-time assistant superintendents. A K-State alumnus in the Kansas City area recently told me he was forced to hire assistants who didn't have a college education, simply because there were no degree holding applicants for the position he advertised. If these trends continue, what are the implications? Golf course administrators may eventually find that hiring a superintendent who has a degree is difficult because too few are available. Some universities have stepped up efforts to attract students into turf programs. For example, at K-State, we produced a video that has been circulated through social media in an attempt to attract more students to our program (<http://goo.gl/GKsYHz>). Faculty at the University of Tennessee hired a full-time marketing person to attract turfgrass students, and enrollment has increased significantly. The truth is, all of us need to become recruiters to attract students to this profession that we care so much about. You have the power to influence career decisions just by inviting young people to the golf course and letting them know about what you do. By doing so, you'll be influencing the future of the golf course superintendent profession firsthand.

# 2017 NCTGA CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

## Raffle Winners

- \$300.00 Andy Hokanson
- \$100.00 Wayne Heintz
- \$50.00 AJ Schmidt
- \$50.00 Ryan Wood



### 2017 NCTGA CONFERENCE RE-CAP

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- 34 Hours of Networking
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Thanks to everyone who made it to the conference and trade show, your board works hard to bring you quality speakers. We have already set dates for 2018, The conference place has yet to be booked, as we are looking at other options. When we get a facility booked we will have it in the upcoming newsletter. The dates are on February 28 though March 2nd, in Fargo. We have secured some great speakers and can't wait to see everyone again!!

## 2017 NCTGA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

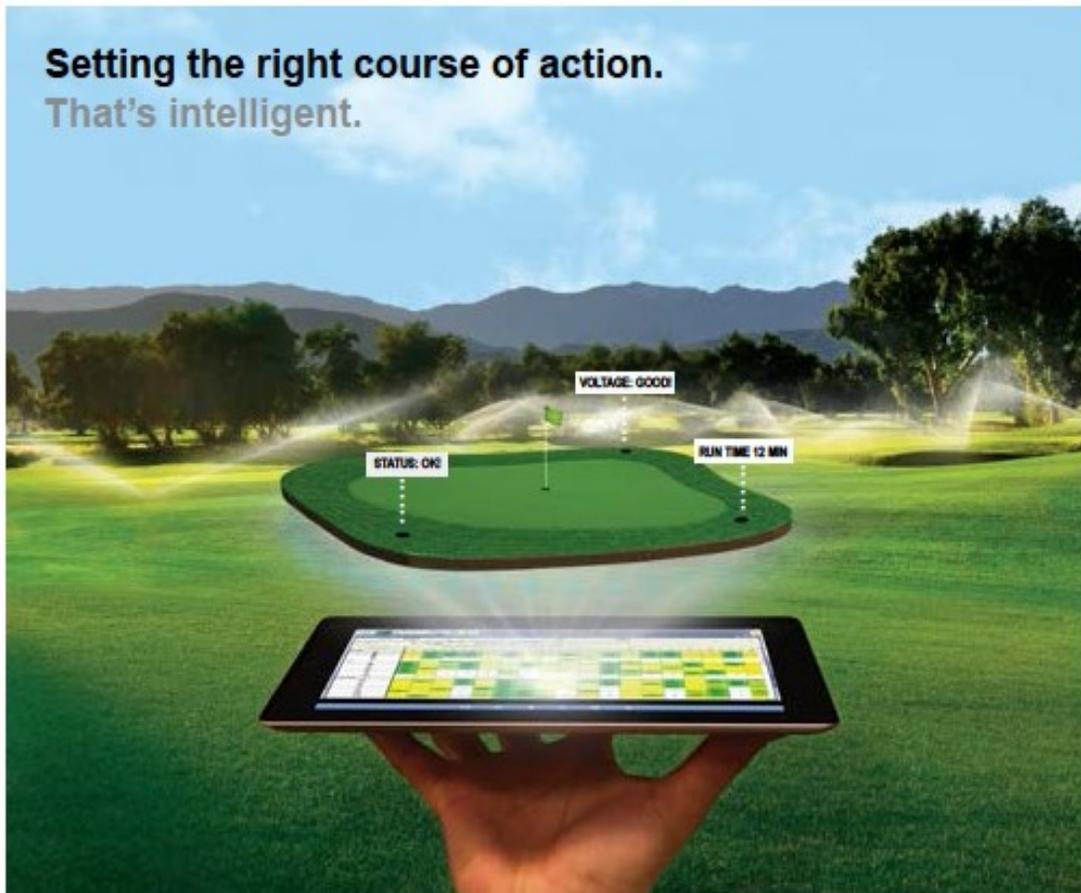


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