

THROUGH THE GREEN

January-February 2018

FOREVER MOORE CHUCK IS SUPT. OF YEAR

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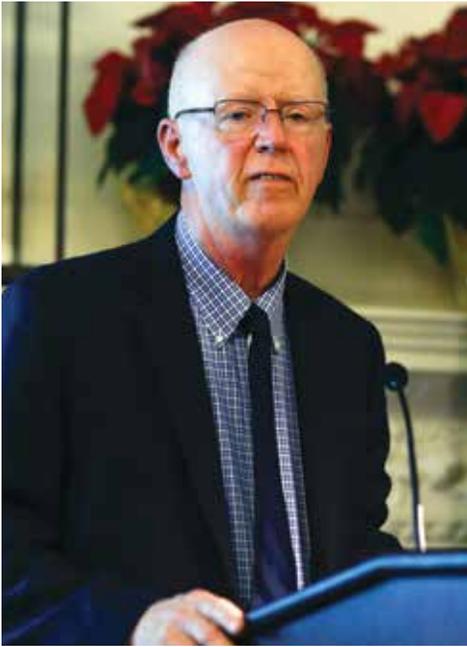
MOORE MAKES GOOD ON HOME RUN CALL

Chuck Moore admits he was about as green as the grass when he first went to work at what was then The Hampton Club on St. Simons Island in 1995. More than once, he remembers hunkering down in the old pump house while his boss grappled with the ageing hydraulic system and its mass of valves, bolts and gauges. Like a nurse in the operating room, Moore found himself handing over tools while the surgeon sweated away.

“He’d ask for a certain type of wrench and I wouldn’t know what he was talking about,” Moore laughs. “To this day he still makes fun of me about it, telling me I couldn’t even turn

The family Moore, from left, Cayden, 10, Chuck, Connie and Connor, 16.





Rick Mattox announces Chuck Moore as Superintendent of the Year.



Chuck Moore receives an extra gift from Superintendent of the Year co-presenter Rocky Dreibrudt of Corbin Turf and Ornamental Supply.

a wrench.” That boss was Berry Collett, CGCS who soon came to see qualities he liked in the kid fresh out of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. So much so that, less than five years later, when Collett left to take over at Sea Island Golf Club, he recommended Moore take his place.

At that point, Moore had no more than a few months under his belt as a superintendent, having taken a job at Francis Lake Golf Club, a small facility near Valdosta in 1999. “I knew they had to get Chuck back,” Collett says. “He knew the programs, he was good with people and he had the work ethic. Those are the three things you need to be successful. I knew he was going to be a home run.”

Moore, of course, did come back and has been at what became The King and Prince Golf Course since 2000. He has indeed been such a “home run” and in so many ways, that in December he was named the Georgia GCSA Superintendent of the Year. An honor that Moore has since learned is bigger than he imagined.

News of his win bounced back to him in various newspaper and magazine articles. It flooded across his desk through emails and popped up on the Internet. Perhaps the most unexpected splash though came when management at The King and Prince took out a billboard on Highway 17 announcing the news to the thousands and thousands of drivers coming off the causeway over Fancy Bluff Creek. That was until he learned that Rep. Jeff Jones plans to make Moore the focus of a resolution in the State House in the new year.

“It’s a big deal but I had no idea how big of a deal it was in the eyes of other people,” Moore says. “The company and the community have just been overwhelming with their sup-

port. As much as it’s been overwhelming it’s been kind of eye-opening that so many people outside of the golf course superintendent crowd pay so much attention. I’ve gotten so many compliments.”

That’s a far cry from those first few days on the job when Collett jokes that Moore was so new to it all that he was almost awestruck. “He had a long way to go. I thought he might have been a bit slow mentally,” Collett laughs. “I was pretty hard on them back then. I worked their butts off. I really wanted to teach them how to work.”

Outside Moore’s wife, Connie, and sons Connor, 16, and Cayden, 10, Collett was about as proud as anyone could be when he watched his protégé step to the podium as Superintendent of the Year. Himself a past winner (2016), Collett was thrilled that one of his own was now in that elite club. “I was proud of him. Really proud of him,” Collett says. “He handles pressure so well, almost to the point where you think he’s laid back, but he still gets the job done. He handles his staff really well. He’s just a really good person.”

If there was anyone else from outside the family as proud and pleased as Collett it was the man who nominated Moore for the award, Rick Mattox, general manager at The King and Prince Golf Course. Mattox, who has been at the club since shortly after it opened in 1989, described Moore as “one of the kindest and most innovative people I have ever known.” “He has provided our facility with a quality product day in and day out since he started,” he added. “He’s the finest, most dedicated individual I have know in my 50 years as a professional.”

The respect is mutual. Moore refers to the man he regards



Faces of a winner: Chuck Moore experienced a range of emotions accepting the Superintendent of the Year award.

as “almost a second father” as, Mr. Mattox. One of the first indications of Mattox’s character came when Moore was still an intern and had just finished playing the course with several buddies. They were in the parking lot chatting after their round when Mattox came out from the pro shop to introduce himself to Moore’s group.

“That made me feel like I was somebody, even though I wasn’t anybody,” Moore says. “I can’t speak highly enough about Mr. Mattox. He’s been wonderful through the birth of my two kids, the death of my father, some health issues with my wife. He has always stressed family first and I’m so grateful. He is the perfect gentleman.”

Chuck Moore grew up in Valdosta and by some measures was late to golf. Baseball was his game in high school but he discovered golf during a two-year stint at Valdosta State University. It was one of the few hints of inspiration he found there. Nothing out of his core classes captured his imagination. Then, although he doesn’t remember how, he learned of the golf turf program at ABAC.

“For the first time in my life I was making good grades,” Moore says. “I really found something I loved and that interested me, so I wanted to learn and I enjoyed learning.” He made the President’s List and the Dean’s List every quarter. He got a job on the crew – such as it was – at a nine-hole par three course in Tifton that is no longer around. He was hooked.

After graduation he went to The King and Prince full-time

and before long worked his way into the assistant superintendent title. If the old pump house was a challenge, so was the transition to authority. “There was a learning curve,” Moore says. “It was a little bit tough. To go from being an intern, to being on the crew, to spray tech, to telling your buddies what to do. That was interesting.”

A couple years later, in early ’99, Moore landed the job at Francis Lake and it seemed like the stars aligned for him. He was close to home again and close again to his longtime girlfriend who had a job teaching in the area. They bought a house beside the fifth green and married that summer. For all intents and purposes it seemed like “the perfect situation.”

Of course, as it turned out, the Moores wouldn’t be there too long. The opportunity at The King and Prince was too good to pass up and after little more than a year, he was back on familiar terrain. Still, he says, that time at Francis Lake was some of the most valuable of his career precisely because the budget was small and so was the crew.

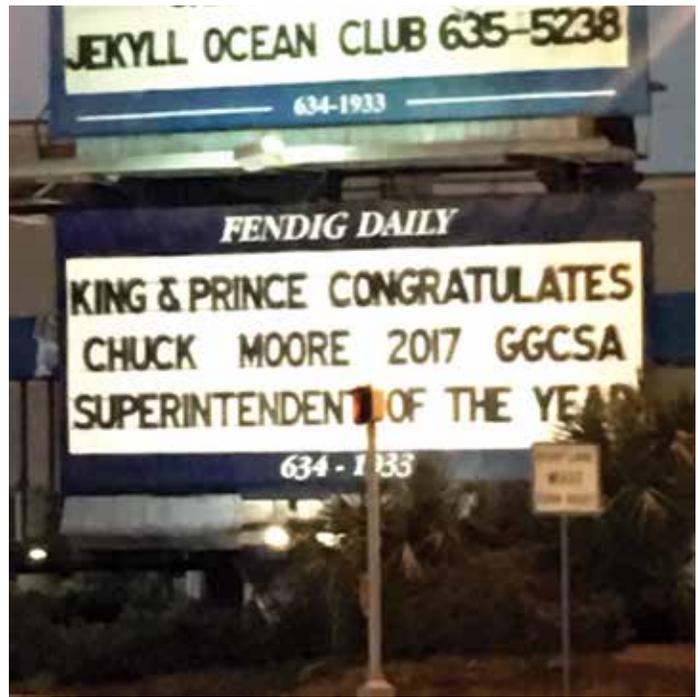
“It was me and two people,” he says. “So, I was the superintendent, the assistant, spray tech, irrigation tech and mechanic. It was tough. You’d be spraying greens and something would break down and you had to stop and fix it yourself. But wearing all those hats at the same time was very beneficial. It was great experience and, I know not everyone wants to go that path, but I highly recommend it. I was lucky to be working for a great family, the Leonards, and I am so grateful they took a chance on me.”

At The King and Prince, Moore has overseen some major work including installation of a new pump house – one that required less wrench-turning – and wet well in 2001, a new irrigation system in 2007 and then a \$3.6-million total renovation in 2009. He has hosted four Georgia GCSA golf championships and 10 bermudagrass conferences, underlining his commitment to his colleagues and the profession.

Few, if any of them, were surprised when Moore's name was announced in the banquet hall that night in December. Certainly, none were as surprised as he was on the night. It was no big deal that his family came along. They'd been to events with him before. As had Mattox. His assistant superintendent J.B. Workman is a regular at the annual meeting. The one face that surprised him at his table when he sat down was that of his equipment technician Joe Williamson. "I guess that gave me an inclination something was going on," he says.

In the days after, Moore says he found a few moments to go through the list of previous winners of the award. "It's a tremendous honor to be chosen for this by your peers," he says. "It's a neat deal to be on that list of winners forever, to think that my kids, and my kids' kids will be able to look and see my name there in future."

In the nearer term though, Moore, who turned 48 the week before Christmas, says the award has been a shot in the arm.



The billboard announcing Chuck Moore's win.

While his love for the job and for his facility have never been stronger, he admits his reaction to the award has given him a "boost." "You do the job day after day for so long..." he says. "This has re-energized me a little bit. It's a great honor." ■



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(706) 769-2116 (fax)
(888) TURF-665