

For immediate release

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Georgia Superintendents Name Four to New Hall of Fame

Hartwell, GA - Four men who helped shape Georgia golf literally from the grass roots up will be honored as the first inductees of the new Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association Hall of Fame. Harold Baldwin, Palmer Maples Jr., Randy Nichols and Charlie Underwood will be inducted at the association's annual Night on the Green Carpet in Atlanta early November.

"These men, each in their own unique way, made the game and the business of golf better off," says Georgia GCSA president, Anthony Williams, CGCS from Stone Mountain Golf Club. "Their personal contributions are immense and on record but their legacies continue to grow through the standards they set and the countless people they mentored and inspired. A lot of golfers may not be familiar with the names of these men but they benefit from what they did for the game every time they tee it up."

Those who will be inducted November 7 at Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort Center:

Harold Baldwin:

It has been said Harold Baldwin could grow grass on a cue ball. An engineer who built bridges with the 82nd Airborne Division in World War Two, he parachuted into Holland the day after D-Day and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He began his 50-plus year turfgrass career at the Atlanta Army Depot, now Fort Gilham, where he answered the call from the base commander and built a nine-hole course. From that beginning, he evolved into a legendary superintendent.

Baldwin retired from the army in 1960 and spent two years constructing the first 18 holes at Callaway Gardens. Other courses he maintained include Lakeside Country Club and Indian Hills Country Club where he supervised construction and worked until semi-retirement in 1986. Baldwin was Georgia GCSA president in 1963-64 and was a life-member of the association. He died in October, aged 91, just days after learning of his induction into the Hall of Fame.

Palmer Maples, Jr, CGCS:

One of the most decorated superintendents in Georgia's history, Palmer Maples Jr., 79, was a great innovator, teacher and administrator in addition to being an excellent golf course superintendent. He spent his early years as a superintendent in North Carolina, where he grew up in a family already well-known for producing golf course superintendents and golf course architects. He was president of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association in 1967-69.

Just two years later, he won Superintendent of the Year from the Georgia GCSA while at The Standard Club where he also became one of the first certified golf course superintendents (CGCS) in the nation. In 1975, he became president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. In 1976 he served as GCSAA's director of education and later would serve as acting executive director helping steer that association through at turbulent time.

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In 1992, he was again recognized as Superintendent of the Year by the Georgia GCSA. In 1999, two years after he retired ending a 16-year term at Summit Chase Country Club, he received the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award. In 2000 he received the United States Golf Association Green Section Award. He was inducted to the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame in 2002.

Randy Nichols, CGCS:

Once featured in a national magazine short list of “Titans of our industry,” Randy Nichols, 64, was the long-time superintendent at Cherokee Town and Country Club. He was Georgia GCSA president in 1985-86 and in 1993-94 served as president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. His term as president is remembered as a turning point in the fortunes of the association, which today numbers close to 20,000 members. During a sensitive political time at the national level, Nichols overhauled systems and technologies and championed turfgrass research and environmental stewardship.

Long-time industry observer, Pat Jones, once wrote of Nichols’ time at GCSAA: “Randy Nichols, the quiet man from Atlanta, risked his personal and professional life to give the reins of the association back to its members ... Because Nichols had the courage to act on his convictions, the association has made a great leap forward under a more sophisticated executive team and a leadership philosophy that (despite what some may think) puts members first.”

Nichols was voted Georgia GCSA Superintendent of the Year in 1994 and received the national association’s Distinguished Service Award in 1996. He also held office with the Georgia Turfgrass Association and served on the Georgia State Golf Association’s advisory committee.

Charlie Underwood:

Revered by today’s generation of superintendents as a ground-breaker, Charlie Underwood, is the only man to have served two terms as Georgia GCSA president, in 1971-72 and 1979-80. A life-member of the association, he was Superintendent of the Year in 1991. An icon at Northwood Country Club in Lawrenceville, he was one of the first superintendents to move into the role of general manager. Later he became a regional superintendent for ClubCorp traveling the country supervising the grow-in and construction of many courses including Bear’s Best Atlanta.

Underwood began his superintendent career at Northwood in 1964 and served in that role until 1982 when he became general manager, and his son, Chuck, became superintendent. In 1978, he helped found the Georgia Turfgrass Foundation with the support of then Gov. George Busbee. He was mentor to many of today’s successful superintendents including Georgia Golf Hall of Famer Mark Esoda, CGCS from Atlanta Country Club. Esoda says of Underwood, “He was a leader in every respect and truly ahead of his time. He opened the door to new realms where a career as a golf course superintendent could lead.”

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