

## ***Most Valuable Technician Award Nomination***



### **Ramon Salas Nomination**

*Submitted by Robert Maycock, superintendent at Azusa Greens Country Club in Azusa, Calif., and a one-year GCSAA member*

In the 15 years I have been here, Ramon Salas is without a doubt one of the main reasons we have been able to withstand the economic pressures of the down economy which have caused other public daily-fee courses to go by the wayside. For 35 years, Ramon has always put this course and its survival above any personal goals.

For the 26 years Ramon has been with Azusa Greens, never once have we had to buy one single piece of new mowing equipment. If a piece of mowing equipment is needed, all I have to do is contact a nearby golf course. In most cases, they're more than happy to give us a piece of equipment which perhaps hasn't run in years. Within days, Ramon will restore it into a reliable, dependable piece of equipment. It is such a well-known fact in the golfing community that other superintendents now sell us these "junk pieces" because they all know Ramon will work his magic on it and it will be running in no time.

In the 15 years I have been here, and given the fact that 3/4 of the maintenance workers have been here 25 years or more, we have had more than our share of in-house disagreements between workers. Because Ramon is one of the only dual-speaking employees (Spanish and English), he is the one who mediates any squabbles between workers, always putting the golf course first and foremost when handling these matters.

Just ask any of the few salesman who call on us. Like our salesperson from R&R Products says: "If Ramon orders a part, trust me ... it has probably been rebuilt 10 times over before he buys the part from us." Another example is one of the three irrigation motors that had been in service for almost 50 years. The manufacturer asked us about obtaining the motor, because they had never seen one in operation this long. To say we have saved over \$1 million dollars since I have been here would be an understatement.

A few years ago when the GCSAA convention was in Anaheim, a bunch of superintendents from Sweden stopped by for lunch after attending a meeting with our neighbor, Rain Bird. They said that they wanted to see some new equipment "in action" since they were always years behind in respect to equipment. Yet when they saw our tee mowers, they looked like Japanese tourists taking pictures of them because they said they had never seen such old riding greensmowers outside of old maintenance textbooks and couldn't believe they worked and worked so well!

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The one sore spot Ramon and I have is my spraying and housekeeping practices when using my spray equipment. You will never see a sign of any pesticide residue or empty pesticide container around our shop. He's constantly on me about this subject.

Ramon leads all of our weekly safety meetings, and in 15 years we only recently had a minor accident which required immediate medical attention (an irrigation worker had slipped while picking up some pipe) which turned out only to be a torn muscle.

I realize we are not a major player as far as golf courses go, Ramon's talents are really only be known by us and no one else. But besides being the best and smartest mechanic I have ever seen, he is what I call a "man's man." He is the father of three and when his youngest daughter, Lizette, was 7, he began to teach her the game of golf after both his other kids never showed any interest in the game.

At the age of 17, Lizette had become a high school girl's state champion here in California, the 2005 ESPN amateur athlete of the year, represented the United State in tournaments in both Mexico and Japan and earned a scholarship to play collegiately at USC. In her first year at USC, she was not only the Pac-10 player of the year but was also a member of their national-championship golf team. In her three years at USC, Lizette has always been ranked among the top-5 individual women golfers.

What's so remarkable about Ramon is that when most parents would sit back and watch to reap the benefits of their success, Ramon still spends two and sometimes three nights a week at the course, helping our head professional with his Kids First golf program or assisting our high school golf coach with his students. Using the same talents he has used maintaining our equipment, Ramon also repairs old golf clubs which are given to him by our golfers, cutting them down and regripping them to give to the younger kids in our golf program who cannot afford golf clubs, all for free. Ramon pays for any of the costs for that out of his own pocket.

I truly do respect this man, not only as a great mechanic and a great parent with three wonderful kids, but as a person as well.