

Leaving It To Chance

Too many golf courses are leaving their irrigation programs to chance. Eventually, it will catch up with them. Hopefully, it won't take an act of tragedy to convince them that manual watering went out with horse drawn plows and hand-sewing.

This should not be taken as a commercial for the automatic irrigation industry, although at times it might sound like one. Obviously, the business of supplying and installing dial-a-rain systems is a spiraling one with competition within its ranks. Thus, we are not indorsing the company; we are promoting the product and idea behind it.

The disadvantages of a manual dependence on irrigation are many.

Probably, the most glaring adversity attached is the labor problem it nurtures. Since the hours are weird (late night, early morning shifts make the job about as attractive as cleaning stables), there is bound to be constant turnover in personnel — hand-placing sprinklers and running around the course to set them in motion.

The trend erodes further along labor lines because of the minimum appeal the job presents, often forcing the golf course superintendent to hire applicants who are less than appealing, themselves. This results in slipshod handling of the cranky chores and the super usually winds up being a watchdog watching over his hired hand. So, the quality of the work suffers.

Another disadvantage - more aptly a hazard - is the danger involved in manual course watering. Only recently a crew of two (that's the least number as dictated by state law) at a nearby club was involved in an accident in which one member met an untimely death. The two-man buddy system wasn't a factor here. But what if the job were solo and the worker had been seriously injured. . . caught in a tipped over truck in the dead of night with no one aware of his plight?

The danger factor leaks over to plain uncomfortable and uninviting conditions by the very nature of the time and place. Sometime ago, at an Eastern course (obviously where two-man crews weren't mandatory), a lone worker was found . . . chained to a tree, beaten and scared half out of his mind after being mugged while watering the layout.

Aside from the personnel woes, which account for enough ammunition to switch to automatic irrigation in themselves, the manual application simply does not do an adequate job. Working in the dark (most watering of fairways and roughs takes place after 8 p.m. and on into the wee hours), the laborer finds himself exposed to the possibility of a helter-skelter performance. And, if he is not motivated properly, that performance can go all out of whack.

Mind you, the automatic irrigation system does require occasional "touch-up" services by hand. It is not perfect but so close to it that a uniform watering of the target area is had virtually by every kick of the switch. Thus, installation of the equipment overshadows convenience by performing a task which is almost impossible to complete by hand without encountering major flaws and problems.

The automatic irrigation program is not a luxury, as some club members and purse watchers claim. Rather, it is a highly refined method of safeguarding the health of the course when Mother Nature gets to putting a squeeze on the plant by shutting off her

water supply. It has been a veritable lifesaver for many a course and a help in retaining the sanity of many a superintendent.

The combination of performance and elimination of labor problems makes it well worth the while for clubs without automatic systems to study the possibility of switching to them. In the long run, they save a lot of headaches . . . and heartaches. They should be considered an integral part of the super's arsenal in his never-ending quest to present and perpetuate the very best playing conditions his know how and Mother Nature's cooperation can bring about.

Gerry Finn

NEXT MEETING SEPTEMBER 19, 1977

**HAMPDEN COUNTRY CLUB
HOST SUPERINTENDENT — BOB JOHNSTON
DIRECTOR'S MEETING 9:30
MEMBERSHIP MEETING 11:00
LUNCH (RESERVATIONS PLEASE) 12:00
GOLF, after lunch
EVENING on your own**

DIRECTIONS: Take Mass Pike west to Palmer exit, #8. Take right from exit and follow to Palmer center. At center turn right onto route 20 (west) and follow approximately 6 miles to Main Street, Wilbraham (on left). This road lead directly to golf course which is approximately 8 miles.



Bob Johnston is our host for the September meeting. Bob graduated from Stockbridge in 1969. He then spent 1 year as assistant for Wayne Ripley at Blue Hill Country Club. Bob then went to Winnisuket Country Club in S. Bellingham, Mass. as superintendent. After spending 4 years there he went to Hampden Country Club and has been there since.

I'm sure our members are looking forward to visiting Bob and playing his fine golf course.

The Golf Car Caper

One of life's pie-in-the-sky job possibilities broke the tedium of another hot, summer day recently when opportunity presented itself in the form of "test driver" for motor-powered golf cars. It was an experience, although meaningless and purposeless to the point where I was just driving for "feel" of this story.

This deals somewhat with an invasion into the golf car field of a foreign model . . . sort of a play on the Jaguar coming into the American lair of the Corvette. And, naturally, the victims (or would-be victims since the car has had limited acceptance and success) are concerned with the new competition.

The new wheels in town belong to a company called Melex. Its American distributors import the qualified copy of the more popular E-Z-Go from the Communist country of Poland. And, please no Polish jokes about this crawling kielbasa.

Well, just for a first hand assessment of the car, I took the wheel. I was impressed with the way the Melex handled, even though it did seem to drag on uphill climbs. What turned my affirmative on was the way the steering system seemed to give me complete control of the car. If you have ever known the experience of trying to keep a wavering front end on track, you get the point here.

My next trip was in the E-Z-Go and, to tell the truth, I couldn't notice much difference between the two . . . other than the more solid wheel grip of the Melex. They ran about the same speed and were equally balky on steep inclines.

So what, you ask?

Well, I find myself amazed at the way the golf car business has developed ever since the world's golfers decided to go automotive in their method of covering a course. What started out as a risky effort - with a vehicle that strayed just above the putt-putt stage - has become a highly competitive undertaking. It has reached the fervor of the American automobile ad to ad combat zone. Not only that, some of the deals would make your credit card curl.

The American case against Melex, for example, is the old high-priced parts spiel used to discourage purchase of foreign autos. And it culminates with the mention of an anti-trust suit, suspicion that the manufacturer is a fly-by-night outfit and keep your eye on that grand old flag closing rider.

Remembering that this piece you're reading should not be looked upon as involvement, it's kind of interesting to observe what goes on when new competition poses a threat to the established group of companies serving the course riding public.

For one thing, country clubs and public courses may be able to do more window shopping when they are ready to reinforce their golf car fleets. One more entry, especially if it comes in at a lower price, makes for a little more bargaining power . . . which isn't all that bad should you be at the purchasing end of the conversation.

It amuses me, too, to learn that certain clubs have drawn up member-inspired specifications for the purchase of new golf cars. One club is said to insist on all "bucket seats" for their models. Another, it has been learned, will have nothing except four-wheel jobs on its grounds.

There are many clubs who place the power of golf car purchase in the hands of the superintendent . . . good sense since he usually is the one responsible for its maintenance. Thus, the repair factors of cars must be taken into consideration. . . as well as the levels of comfort and transporting performance.

The whole business has come around to the point where the golf car takes almost as much of the super's time as his greens and fairway manicuring efforts. Test driving them, though, takes some of the drudgery out of decision-making in buying them. Take one out for a spin sometime.

Gerry Finn



President Wayne Zoppo presenting 25 year pin from GCSAA to Phil Cassidy.



President Wayne Zoppo presenting 50 year plaques from GCSA of New England to Ed Phinney and John Latyis.

RESULTS OF SUPT. PRESS/CELEBRITY TOURNAMENT AT THE COUNTRY CLUB

First Low Net	71	Guy Tedesco Dave Forbes
First Low Gross	73	Mel O'Kelley Ray Fitzgerald
First Low Net - Individual Closest to Pin Longest Drive	66	Lenny Blodgett Norm Mucciarone Larry Bunn

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What's A Superintendent To Do?

When Rising Expectations . . .

. . . Confront Declining Resources

You can almost always have a sure bet if you say that whenever two or more golf course superintendents get together they will eventually discuss the requests of their course's golfers and how this conflicts with the budget they have to do the job.

A similar wager about those inside the clubhouse would probably be just as safe, with the twist being that the clubhouse dwellers would be concerned with how the superintendent fritters away their funds while the man down the road is doing such a superior job.

This is the confrontation of rising expectations and declining resources. The golfers desire more and more, or at least make unrealistic comparisons to other courses, while the superintendent is granted lower budgets and faced by higher costs for all goods and services.

"What's a superintendent to do?" asks the headline. Certainly a question easier to pose than answer, but nevertheless, a question that deserves exploration and attempted answers.

This problem of rising expectations and declining resources is not new, nor is it isolated strictly upon golf course superintendents. Each and everyone of us face it daily, just as almost everyone else is bound to do sooner or later. Obviously, the solution is not an easy one or the problem would not persist for so long a time, nor with so broad of scope. A complicating factor added to the problem is what works one place has no guarantee of working anywhere else.

In the most basic of terms, a golf course superintendent faced by this problem has few possible alternatives. He can rely upon the reputation he has developed and trust that his recommendations will be accepted. He can arrange "test plots," and "demonstrations." He can do whatever he believes is proper, given a certain budget, even though the golfers may complain. Or, he can follow the dictates of the golfers for as long as the budget holds out and then tell them that that will be all of the maintenance and management they can have until more money is forthcoming.

Certainly, there are other possible solutions, but these basic points probably get the idea across. The solution is not going to be an easy one, and patience and understanding on everyone's part will be required.

Of the above suggestions, probably only the first two have any chance of working for the superintendent and the course. Basically, both of the above suggestions rely upon "education" of the member, by the superintendent.

Reliance upon a reputation is undoubtedly the best possible position for anyone. If the superintendent's suggestions have proven acceptable in the past, they will certainly have a better chance in the future. However, superintendents cannot wait until the last minute to try and build a basis for acceptance, it is a continuously on-going proposition of informing the golfers what

you are doing, why you are doing it and letting them brag about the splendid results.

"Demonstration plotting," is another usually acceptable approach, providing there is sufficient time and even small amounts of money for the project. More and more superintendents are setting aside relatively small areas of the actual playing surface from time to time and demonstrating the differences a particular operation can make to the course. Following the application, operation, or whatever, the golfers are asked to decide which of the two areas they want, providing they are willing to pay for it. Most often, if the superintendent has done his homework and knows the total cost figures, the golfers will opt for the improved conditions because they can actually see the differences.

The only other serious problem a superintendent will have is to educate his golfers on the effect just a few miles distance can make in the maintenance budget of two courses. Natural terrain, soil conditions, the course's maintenance history and even rainfall can vary tremendously in short distances, and have significant effects upon what a superintendent can or cannot do given any amount of money. In fact, the whole idea of comparative golfing should be overcome, but because grass has always been greener elsewhere, it is unlikely that such thinking can be easily reversed today.

Bylaw Amendments

At the July meeting held at Halifax Country Club, President Wayne Zoppo read the following bylaw proposal and addition. In accordance with our bylaws as stated in Article XIII.

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Regular Members at any Regular meeting of the Association providing the amendments are included in the notice of said meeting.

At the next Regular Meeting of our Association to be held Monday, Sept. 19, 1977 at Hampden C.C., the following bylaw changes or additions will be voted on.

Present Bylaw

Page 8 - Article IV - Section 7 - Item 1

When a 25 year member retired as a Golf Course Superintendent or is permanently disabled, he becomes a Life Member. He shall have all the privileges of the Association except to hold office. He shall not pay annual dues.

Proposed Bylaw

Page 8 - Article IV - Section 7 - Item 1

When a 25 year member retires as a Golf Course Superintendent or is permanently disabled, he becomes a Life Member. A member with less than 25 years may become a Life member at the discretion of the Board of Directors. He shall have all the privileges of the Association except to hold office. He shall not pay annual dues.

Proposed Bylaw

Junior Associate Member

1. A Junior Associate Member shall be employed as a superintendent of a golf course and shall be primarily interested in golf course maintenance. A Junior Associate Member will not have the right to vote or hold office and shall pay the initiation fee and the annual dues established by the Association. One who has been a Junior Associate Member for three years shall automatically qualify as an Associate Member.

Would like to thank Pierre Coste and the members of The Country Club for being our host at last month's meeting. Our members found a well conditioned and challenging golf course to play. Thank you for having us as your guests.

Golf Chairman

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