



April 1979

Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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The Ethics Snyndrome

Violations of accepted ethics among golf course superintendents are on the increase. Why?

"It's baffling to me," offered Bob Mitchell. "I look around at my profession and I see a lot of fine, dedicated, decent people. Yet, reports of unethical behavior are beginning to flood the country. I wish I could pinpoint the reason."

Mitchell, a former president of the Gold Course Superintendents Association of America, presented some in-depth information on the state of ethics during the University of Massachusetts Turf Conference. And from the very beginning of his treatment, he admitted that too many variables entered the problem and its solution.

"This is a controversial subject," he sighed. "And when you attempt to come to a conclusion, there is a myriad of principles to be considered. I suppose it all boils down to the affected parties. One sees it one way, the other sees it differently."

Mitchell, presently the superintendent at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Va., told of a number of test cases in which the GCSAA's code of ethics was challenged. The results of those confrontations reflect no cut and dried decisions. In most, no severe penalties were handed alleged violators. It's as Mitchell suggests ... no one can prove that the verdicts are indisputable.

For example, is it a violation of the code of ethics if a superintendent takes his expertise to another course under the urging of that club's members and the knowledge of their own super? In one section of the country, the double-dipper—if you will—was suspended from the local chapter.

"If someone asked me to prove that such a practice was wrong, I'd have a tough time doing it," Mitchell remarked. "Naturally, I am in agreement with the feeling that one job has been eliminated by a super taking over an additional course. But, in the long run, does it really hurt the profession? And, more important, how can we control the hiring methods and philosophies of the employer? Frankly, it's none of our business even though it raises the question of an ethics violation."

Mitchell is the second of a third-generation golf course superintendent family. His father has had a successful and rewarding career, he is in the midst of duplicating and perhaps surpassing that and his son shows signs of eclipsing dad and grandfather.

What has this to do with the ethics' situation?

"Well, is just might be that attitudes change from generation to generation," Mitchell proposed. "I look back at my father and see a different outlook than I have now. He's from the old school which treats the profession as a religion. I inherited some of that outlook but leaned heavily on education. But my son approaches the profession as part of a business. Don't get me wrong. He's good, darned good. But he can be good without offering as much input into the job as my father and I have."

It is this evolution of attitudes that perhaps answered the

question of why ethical violations are more prevalent today than they were in the past. "I'm only guessing at this," Mitchell cautioned. "But I suspect that the younger supers don't have the same traits as their predecessors. Call it lack of compassion or whatever. And, then again, maybe I'm all wrong."

Mitchell's perplexity in determining the reasons for the unethical upswing is matched by the lack of a definitive method of determining the social malady. "It all goes back to the cases I mentioned," he said. "You can listen to both sides of an ethical-associated accusation and have a difficult time deciding whether it is a violation in the true spirit of the code."

Nonetheless, it's a documented fact that the GCSAA has seen fit to rewrite its code of ethics in the face of a continuing incidence of alleged violations. And this is justifiable reason in itself for all members of the profession to show some concern.

"I believe that GCSAA members have an obligation to themselves, their profession and their national organization to become acquainted with our code of ethics," Mitchell summed up his personal view. "If a super accepts membership in the GSCAA, he should accept the responsibility of adhering to its bylaws and its code of ethics. If all the rules are followed, there will be no need for a discussion of ethics."

Despite the human flaw in recognizing violations of the code, the problem does exist. It is high time that these violations be accepted as such and every attempt made to prevent their recurrence.

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting

Eastward Ho C.C.

April 9, 1979

Directors Meeting 9:30

Regular Meeting 10:15

Lunch 11:30 Golf after lunch

NOTE Business meeting and lunch will not be at the club but will be at the Wayside Inn in Chatham.

Directions

Route 6 to exit 11. Go left on route 137 for 50 yards to Pleasant Bay Road. Follow to Route 28. Go right on route 28 to golf course on Fox Hill Road.

To Wayside Inn. Go past Fox Hill Road to first traffic light. Go right to Chatham rotary. Go around rotary through town. Inn is on left. Parking in rear.

Host Supt. Brian Cowan

Tel. # Home 432-9041

Office 945-9230

Call for lunch reservations. Cut off Date April 2, 1979

Golf's Changing Design

It used to be that the golf course architect had it relatively easy in putting his creativity to work.

"When the money was there and the restrictions were minimal, we could really let ourselves go," remembers Dr. Marvin Ferguson whose drawing board genius is recognized throughout his profession. "But now, it's a little different. The economics of setting up a course and its attachments has formed its own barriers. Actually, it's more of a challenge and often it produces a stronger product."

Dr. Ferguson, a panelist at the University of Massachusetts Turf Conference, points to the financial cutback as the most influential additive in the construction of new golf courses.

"When the building budget is tight, we concentrate on the vital areas of the layout," Dr. Ferguson explained. "Greens are the one thing that never can be neglected. They are the focal points lending themselves to determining the players reaction to the course. That's why we have to make sure they're right. . . maybe above anything else."

In a confined spending situation, Dr. Ferguson also chooses to eliminate as many high maintenance sources as possible. "The trend today is to go with as few sand traps as we can get away with," he told. "And the alternative to them is to work a maximum number of natural hazards into the plan."

Dr. Ferguson's golf course design philosophy is based on three factors. . . playability, maintenance and beauty. "We all like to think of the aesthetic effect the course presents," he offered. "But sometimes the playability and maintenance requirements are such that it has to be driven down there in third place in matter of priority."

The typical new golf course must have flexibility and Dr. Ferguson works his design with this in mind. "We have to set up the layout so that we can change the strength of the course without changing its original physical concept," he said. "You can do this many ways. . . the cut of the fairways and height of rough along with strategic placing of teeing areas and pin placements. This has to be arranged in the early stages of construction, though."

Dr. Ferguson notes that a swingback to more moderate approach in determining the length of the course and size of greens is sweeping his profession. "There was a time when everybody thought a course had to be long in order to be difficult," he remarked. "But the strength of a course can rely on many other factors. As for the greens, we seem to be compromising out at around 6000-6500 square feet in size."

Obviously, the move to producing a more compact golf course is in the best interest of maintaining it. "We are well aware of the spiraling costs in conditioning the course and keeping it that way," Dr. Ferguson continued. "And, we have the golf course superintendent in mind from the top of the drawing to the bottom."

Dr. Ferguson also notes that course design follows the dictate of playing traffic. . . and the dreaded golf car. "We pay attention to the proposed pace of play and the means to meeting its requirements," he advised. "I think we all have to agree that the golf car is here to stay and that its overall effect is positive. The most positive happens to be the revenue it generates."

He recalled an interesting incident in the Southwest, his home country since he is from Texas. "Robert Goldwater

(Barry's brother) fought golf cars to the very end at the Phoenix Country Club," Dr. Ferguson revealed. "And he kept them out for a long time. But he finally gave in. . . with one stipulation. That was an agreement to return all golf car revenue to the maintenance budget."

"Well, the first year the revenue from them was in excess of \$100,000 which was more than the original maintenance budget. I don't have to tell you that Phoenix was in pretty good shape for a couple of years. But eventually the money was funneled elsewhere. Wouldn't to be great if all courses revived that arrangement?"

Dr. Ferguson admits that the call for country club courses has weakened somewhat and that the trendy condominium layouts appear to be in demand. "I don't know about that," he frowned. "I think the original purpose there is real estate and selling homesites. Thus, the design of the course becomes secondary. But this is only one of many things that are turning corners in this business."

Golf course designing. . . another profession bending under the force of the changing times.

Gerry Finn

The New England Golf Course Superintendents Association wish to express their deepest sympathy to the family of Tony Caranci on their recent loss.

Late Winter - Early Spring Damage to Golf Turf grass

By J. R. WATSON
Vice President, The Toro Company

During late winter-early spring, fluctuating temperatures and waterlogged, partially frozen soil produce conditions that cause the loss of turf. This loss may be the direct or indirect result of one or more of these phenomena. Direct damage or kill of the permanent grass may occur at any point of the freeze - frozen - thaw cycle so characteristic of this season. In direct injury may result from attacks by disease producing organisms (mostly snowmold and other low temperature fungi) and by traffic on frozen and partially frozen turfgrass areas.

Causes Relating to Temperature Variations

Turfgrass may be destroyed - at the time it freezes, during the time it's frozen, during the time it's thawing, or after it's thawed and growth has begun. Some killing probably occurs during each of these periods. This cycle of freezing, frozen, thawing may be repeated several times during each winter and early spring. When associated with intermittent growth in late winter-early spring, damage may be severe. Death as the plant freezes happens most often in the late fall-early winter, but may occur after a period of growth (particularly rapid growth) in the spring when a sudden drop in tem-

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perature occurs. This is most damaging when the grass plants are in a non-hardened condition. Ice crystals form within the cells and this disruption of the protoplasm may cause death. Too, repeated cycles in the spring will exhaust food reserves upon which the plants must draw to initiate growth. For this reason, *Poa annua* is especially vulnerable.

Death during the time the plant is frozen is unlikely to occur unless it is subjected to traffic. This will seldom occur if a good snow cover exists, which is the case most often during the winter months. However, play during the time period under discussion may cause mechanical damage either by attrition or from pressure which forces the ice crystals through the cells, thereby puncturing them and causing death. Play during time the grass is covered with frost has the same effect.

Death at the time of thawing depends on the amount and the state of the "bound" water within the cell (intra-cellular water). Unless adequate bound water is present in the protoplasm, death may result if thawing is rapid or if inter-cellular water re-enters the cell too rapidly. In the latter case, the cell wall is permeable but the protoplasm is unable to absorb the water. Prolonged cold may be conducive to death because it contributes to brittleness of the protoplasm and, if contact (from traffic) is made, the plant is highly susceptible to damage.

Causes Relating to Traffic

Grass will initiate growth during the warmer periods of late winter-early spring. If the season is characterized by widely fluctuating temperatures, the grass is vulnerable to the freeze-frozen-thaw growth cycle with its attendant problems. Too, the environment produced is highly conducive to disease development. Thus, this may be the most critical phase of the turf management program facing the golf course superintendent. And, he often finds his turf management programs (and, therefore, himself) in direct conflict with the golfing membership, especially those desirous of playing a few early rounds.

Mechanical injury by traffic on partially frozen or wet soil may be immediately evident (visible) or delayed (invisible). Visible injuries (soil displacement) are the footprints and ruts caused by foot and vehicular traffic - sliding and slipping, walking or rolling - on partially frozen or saturated soil. Invisible injury stems from soil compaction.

Although this type of mechanical damage is not confined to the winter months, soil compaction may be far more damaging during this period than generally recognized. Traffic on partially frozen or wet soil, without the protection of living grass, will exert greater pressure (hence, more compacting force) than during the normal growing season. This results, subsequently, in poor growth and may explain "problem areas" which show up in spring and summer for no apparent reason. Cupping areas are particularly vulnerable in this respect.

Traffic on frosted turf causes the frost crystals to puncture leaf cells and kill the grass. Removal of frost, or preventing play when the grass is frosted, is essential.

Control of traffic during vulnerable periods does not always contribute to harmony between early golfing members and the less enthusiastic golfing and non-golfing members. The responsibility for control rests with the club officials-president, green chairman, superintendent and golf professional.

Causes Relating to Ice Sheets and Pondered Water

Turfgrasses, although essentially dormant during the winter months, nevertheless, carry on metabolic (growth) activity, particularly respiration. During late winter-early spring, as growth activity increases, the grass may suffocate (a) if diffusion of atmospheric and soil gases is reduced or stopped; (b) if excess carbon dioxide accumulates, or (c) if oxygen supplies are reduced to a minimum. Such conditions exist under ice sheets in poorly drained areas where the soil remains saturated for extended periods and, under flooded conditions when ponded or standing water persists. The higher the temperature, the shorter the period of time that the grass can survive these adverse conditions.

Under limited (and rare) conditions, ice sheets and ponded water may act as a lens. When this happens, the sun's rays are magnified to the point where the excessive heat produced may cause a burning or scalding of the turfgrass.

Causes Related to Reduced Water Intake

Desiccation is a "wilting" phenomenon. Like wilt, which occurs during the normal growing season, desiccation occurs when evapotranspiration exceeds water intake. This inability of the roots to absorb water, or for the plant to transport it to or through its system, may result from a shallow, poorly branched root system; diseased vascular system, or, from a reduced or restricted soil water supply. Limited soil moisture may be the result of a "dry" soil (not enough water) or of a frozen or partially frozen soil (water unavailable to the root because of its physical state). Thus, the roots simply cannot take in enough water to offset that being lost by the plant and it "desiccates" or dries up - it wilts. Although more serious during periods when the soil is "on the dry side" or partially frozen, desiccation on high windswept sites may occur at any time. The increased air movement causes excessive transpiration and under limited or reduced soil moisture conditions, the plants may die unless protected.

In late winter-early spring, before the irrigation system has been activated, damage from desiccation may be severe. Water hauled in spray tanks or by other means and applied to critical sites will prelude or minimize loss.

Protective Measures

Techniques and procedures that protect, avoid and correct the damage that occurs in late winter-early spring are well known to and understood by the golf course superintendent. For the most part, protective measures relate to production of a healthy vigorous grass and to the control, to the extent possible, of the soil - plant environment. When these factors are adversely impacted by anomalous conditions of weather, poor construction or inadequate equipment and supplies, the responsibility for loss of turfgrass must be shared.

Reminder

Regular members may bring a prospective member to one meeting only prior to his acceptance to the association. No other guests are allowed.

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Voted in at March Meeting
as a Jr. Associate Member

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NEWSLETTER

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