

NEWSLETTER



July, 1980



Golf Course Superintendents Association
OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

Are you a hero or a bum?

Situation A: You are a golf course superintendent at a country club which has been in existence for so many years its tradition runneth over.

Situation B: You are a golf course superintendent at a country club which is just a few seasons out of its cellophane wrapping.

Now comes the test of a golfer's physical knowledge of the course. Is it triple-A in that he realizes the trials and tribulations of grooming a golf course increase as the layout gets older? Or is it four-Z in that he assumes that age of a golf course has nothing to do with the problems encountered in keeping it in tip-top shape condition?

It's been recounted a hundred or more times... if not here, in other journals that you have read. A member of your old and trusty country club goes down the street to the spanking new kid course on the block and comes back raving about its playing condition. In the process, he concludes that the superintendent there knows what he's doing while you should have been put out to pasture long ago.

Sound familiar? It should.

This dilemma has happened to me, one super confided. "When I started out, I landed a job at a course that was hardly out of the construction phase. And, under the guise of being a miracle worker, I gave the members there the type of silky conditions golfers dream about. Naturally, I was a hero. Eventually, I moved on to a better-pay job on an established course. And, all of a sudden, I was a bum. Funny thing, I worked harder on my second job than I did on my first. And, at that, I had the advantage of experience on my side."

How come a new course is much easier to groom than an older one?

"There are a number of reasons," our perplexed friend informed. "But, probably, the most glaring is the compaction that comes with the aging process of a golf course. When the

ground has been packed down solid with the heavy traffic of years of play, the job of getting oxygen and nourishment to the plant -- greens, fairways, ... sometimes even roughs -- becomes most difficult. In truth, the real test of a superintendent's talents comes when he is exposed to this situation."

Putting it another way, the super likens the difference between a new and old course to athletes. "It's like training an Olympic athletic -- one who is about 21 with enthusiasm and budding physical prowess -- one year and then moving on to try to train a Golden Ager," he offered an interesting analogy. "All you have to do in the first instant is set up directions. In the second, you have to prod and apply all your knowhow until it hurts."

The problem of educating country club members to the complexities arising in the task of grooming golf courses lies at the basis of discouraging such unfair comparisons. Most golfers are unaware of the age factor in determining the input of the superintendent in the condition of their playing grounds. Unfortunately, they see only what is in front of their eyes at the immediate moment. And the super, entrusted with the rugged assignment of maintaining an older course suffers because of it.

Some of this unjust criticism has been tempered and even eliminated by the educational process undertaken by certain superintendents working the new course beat. There has been reported many instances where the "blessed" super takes it upon himself to explain the difference between trying to groom, say a five-year-old layout, and a course in the 30 or so-year bracket.

This is strictly a voluntary act on their part but one which should be considered essential in safeguarding their own futures. Sooner or later, a superintendent moves on to bigger jobs and greater challenges. And, more often than not, it involves a change bringing him to a course which has been under the usage gun for many years. In a way, then, that superintendent is doing his profession a laudatory service.

If golfers are made to understand that time and traffic are the instruments of turf trouble, they will soon learn to appreciate that conditioning golf courses includes a number of variables... not the least being the age of the layout. The appreciation of that generally ignored factor will help them understand and perhaps sympathize with the superintendent in his quest to produce a golf course to their liking.

The hero-bum syndrome does exist, though. And it has been instrumental in changing the lives and vocational aims of many a superintendent. There have been examples of supers leaving the profession because of it. And it also has been influential in discouraging would-be superintendents from becoming fixtures in a planned job future.

The old shouldn't be stacked against the new. That comparison is both stupid and unfair. And the golf course superintendent shouldn't be a victim of its frivolous implementation in determining his performance.

NEXT MEETING

Mt. Pleasant C.C. Boylston

July 21, 1980

Directors Meeting 9:30 a.m.

Regular Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Lunch 12:00 noon

Golf 1:00 p.m.

Directions:

From route I-290 take Church St. exit. Go north for two miles. Club is on the right.

Golf Course Superintendents Association

The Name and Initial Game

If you are a golf course superintendent (and proud of the fact, as you should be), is your name prominently displayed at your club?

It should be. Why? Because, as far as the golf course is concerned, you are the most important man on the grounds. What you do -- with the aid and hopeful support of Mother Nature -- generally determines just what kind of conditioned course your members and their guests are playing.

For some strange reason, the identity of the golf course superintendent often is kept a secret. How many scorecards include the superintendent's name? How many country club official directories place the name of the superintendent on that list.

It is the rule, more than the exception, that golfers are left in the dark when trying to learn just who the superintendent of a particular layout is. Very often players, impressed with the condition of the course, would like to know who is responsible for the job well done. And most of the time they abandon the attempt to lay accolades on the man who has made their round that more enjoyable and tolerable.

As a matter of fact, the public relations obligation of the superintendent should be linked to this situation. The super owes the recognition of his performance to the expanded recognition of his profession. And, in pushing for such isolated recognition at his own club, the super is helping both himself and his colleagues.

Recently, a local newspaper story noted the completion of a new irrigation system at a nearby golf course. The article was most flattering to the layout and extolled the efforts to make such an improvement. However, the wrong person was contacted in the reporter's methods to learn of the details.

Instead of the superintendent explaining how the job was completed and what its effect on the course will be, the home pro provided that information and was freely quoted throughout the story. This is no knock on the pro who was simply being cooperative. But it points up the need for the superintendent's profession to make itself visible.

A check with the reporter revealed that he was not aware that his contract for gathering information should have been the superintendent. Further more, he explained that there was no way he could have raised the super, other than to go to extreme digging which he didn't have time to do.

Of course, the home pro was derelict, too. He should have provided the reporter with the name of the superintendent, along with the means of contacting him. But, if the superintendent's name had been hanging on a shingle on the clubhouse or in the club directory, the legitimate source of the irrigation job details would have been available and that super given the recognition which he deserves.

Ignoring the identification of the golf course superintendent is just one of the warped factors found on the country club scene. Another concerns the labeling of courses with initials and the like.

The term "PGA Course" is the most glaring example of unfounded and ill-advised use of vague expressions. What does "PGA Course" mean? Does it mean that the course was designed by a PGA member? Does it mean that the course is endorsed for play by the PGA? Does it mean that only PGA member pros are welcome there? The possibilities multiply as the imagination wanders.

Actually, there is no such thing as a "PGA Course", unless the reference is used in labeling the official home course of the Professional Golf Association of America. In reality, the PGA has nothing to do with the average country club or public layout other than having a fraternal relationship with the home pro -- should he be a member of that organization. The PGA tag does nothing to differentiate one course from another. It doesn't mirror degree of difficulty or acceptance as tournament playing ground. It has no place in informing the golfing public of a course's character or personality.

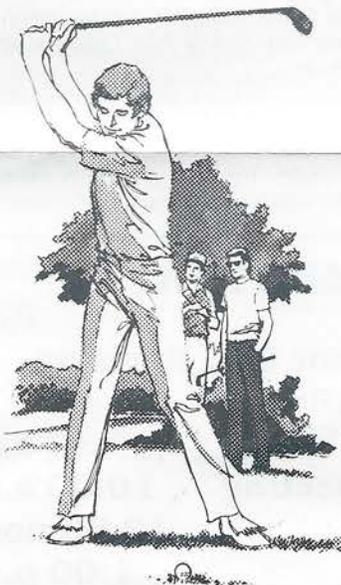
One irate super, who has noted the growing number of "PGA Courses", wonders out loud, "Why can't we say that I groom a 'GCSAA Course'?", he grouses. "As a matter of fact, there is stronger association between the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the average course than with the PGA. The pro, in most cases, has nothing to do with the way the golf course is conditioned or designed. It's ridiculous.

Whether it lends itself to the argument or not, the only association that is openly active in the golf course field is the United States Golf Association (USGA). In conjunction with the Grand and Ancient group of Great Britain, the USGA formulates the rules under which the game of golf is played and physically administered. The USGA, in general, does not flaunt itself in promoting the use of its initials to influence the creditability of golf courses. A "USGA Course"? It makes as much sense as the PGA label.

So, the golf course superintendent should take note of this enigma of sorts which prevails around the national fairway. He definitely should be part of the operational declaration of the course he grooms by seeing to it that he is known by one and all... even if it does take some instigation on his own. And he also should take issue with the use of other professional organizations using their call letter to unjustly promote themselves.

In other words, he should become part of the name and initials game if that is what it takes to keep his profession in the recognition spotlight... where it belongs.

Gerry Finn



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Communications, Credibility and Fairness

Morale problems such as absenteeism, turnover or poor level of performance can be closely related to your employees' sense of whether or not they are being treated fairly. Even if their jobs are less than satisfying, studies show that people will often put up with unpleasant duties as long as they feel that their organization makes an effort to treat them fairly, gives them the sufficient job-related information and makes them feel a part of the overall operation.

One of the primary factors in employee morale is the manager's credibility. The more your employees believe you and support you, the more effective you will be as a supervisor. In a way, it's similar to having a good reputation in that it must be earned and continually maintained.

Consistency is one of the marks of a good manager. People like to know that you will respond to them tomorrow the same as you did yesterday. It is also important that you avoid treating one employee more favorably than another. It is only human that you like some of your people more than others, but don't let your personal tastes affect the quality of your management. Favoritism shows up first in this area of personal attention, and your

people will pick up on it quickly.

An effective manager also keeps a close rein on his emotions. Losing your temper rarely solves a problem, and most employees work best when their surroundings are not in an uproar.

Broken promises can do more to dampen morale than anything else. Do things when and how you say you will and follow through on your plans and programs. Even though your people might understand that it's not always your fault when things don't work as planned, you should avoid making promises unless you know you can deliver.

Be available to your employees for advice and help. People appreciate a leader who will take the time to work with them in solving problems and providing support. Be even-handed in giving coaching, guidance, praise and personal favors.

No matter how good a supervisor you are, sooner or later you will have to discipline an employee. Make sure your discipline is both appropriate and consistent. The punishment must fit not only the violation, but also the circumstances and past record of the offender, and it must be enforced each time there is a violation.

GCSAA Fore Front



Super Chairman Results

- 1st net - Joe Rybka, John Gorman
- 2nd net - Ron Kirkman, Herb Dodge
- 3rd net - Art Washburn, John Allen
- 4th net - Doug Johnson, Joseph Stone

- 1st gross - Mel Okelly, Bob Wilmont
- 2nd gross - Bill Carter, Claude Young
- 3rd gross - Brian Cowan, Warren Sampson
- 4th gross - Jim Diorio, Ed Butler
- Winner of long drive and closest to the pin - Dom Dechantes

Note: Due to the July and August meetings being very close together we are putting a reservation form for the August meeting in this newsletter.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| August Meeting | August 5, 1980 |
| Norton C.C. | |
| Directors Meeting | 10:00 a.m. |
| Regular Meeting | 11:00 a.m. |
| Lunch | 12:00 noon |
| Golf | 1:00 p.m. |

Mail to: Peter Ohlson, 188 Oak St.,
Norton, Mass. 02766

Yes I will attend the meeting.

Please reserve _____ meals for me.

Name _____

Club _____

Use this as a reservation form or a reasonable facsimile.

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