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Tee to Green

July 1988

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Volume XVIII, No. 13

NEW SUPERINTENDENTS

Tony Baviello

I recently contacted most of the new superintendents in the area to get a feel for how they like working in the Metropolitan area, what their individual goals and expectations are, how they handle employee and member relations, etc. Not to my surprise the answers varied widely. Here is how our new colleagues in the area responded to my questions.

When I asked them what their goals were, the responses ranged from the professional to the personal. Some said they wanted to make the best possible course they could deliver, to have good playing conditions while adding artistic beauty and to be respected as a professional. Other answers included hosting a major tournament and achieving happiness in family life.

The way people handle other people has always interested me. There are so many diverse ways of handling employee relations and the club membership. When asked how they liked to handle the crew I got some very innovative answers. One superintendent suggested giving raises for good performance and subtracting money from their pay for defying the rules. Many felt the crew should be dealt with on an individual level, treating them as you yourself like to be treated. Motivation was recognized as an important factor in good employee relations, creating a team attitude and changing jobs were suggested as good ways to enhance motivation. As far as the membership is concerned the answers were split between those who have no problems with the members because they are either silent or

totally supportive and those who work in a club where the members and the Board take an active role, often in an interfering way assuming they know the details of the job, often telling the superintendent how to do his job.

I asked the superintendents if the job lived up to all they expected from it. There was mutual agreement that yes it did and more. Only one dissenter said "it's no big deal if you know what you're doing."

It wasn't difficult to understand and sympathize with the responses when I asked them what the hardest decisions they had to make are. The answers I got were chopping down trees to provide for better air movement, making someone else's budget fit your program, finding the bad eggs in the crew so you can get your way of thinking across, and drawing a line between your professional life and your personal life.

The worst question I asked was whether the new superintendents felt pressure coming into this area. The answers were pretty much the same. In general they felt there was competition from course to course and there is often a lot of pressure when the prior superintendent did such a good job. Some felt it was an extremely expensive area to live in and missed being close to family and friends. It was also expressed to me though that there is a good feeling of camaraderie among the superintendents in the area.

The last question I asked was directed to the two women who obtained the posi-

tion of superintendent. I asked them if they felt it was difficult to be in a career that was so male dominated. Both women responded the same way, no it was not difficult because they were confident in the quality of the work they did.

I want to conclude by stating that after talking to so many young, ambitious people it is encouraging to see that there is real drive and energy to make it work in this area. Everyone recognizes the competitive nature of the area, but they also know that if you succeed here you can succeed just about anywhere. I'd like to thank everyone I talked to and wish them luck in the future.

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A Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Members,

It was a few short months ago when we took over as editors of the "Tee to Green." A change that was necessitated when our former editor Ken Fleseck left the area. Ken had made many improvements in the format of the "Tee to Green" and had worked very hard in an effort to change printers. This change was made to hopefully improve the quality of our newsletter.

Due to the relatively short time we had before Ken left, there really was not much of a transition period for us to learn the ins and outs of putting together this newsletter. We accepted the challenge and vowed to do the best we could.

Over the past few months we have put out 4 issues of the "Tee to Green." Unfortunately we have made some mistakes along the way. Some were mine and others were the printers. I assure you that we have taken steps to reduce our errors in the future and we apologize to everyone for any mistakes that have gotten by us. A very disturbing part of this job is when you discover a problem after the final plates are done and making the correction would delay the printing by over a week or more.

The most troubling aspect of putting out this newsletter is the time factor needed for set up and printing. We are making a serious effort to be current with our information, articles and issues but have found that things don't always work out the way we planned. Right now we are working on five to six weeks from the time that the information is compiled to the time that you receive the issue in the mail. When we first started we had planned on only two to three weeks thus contributing to many of our problems and mistakes.

At the time we were putting together this issue, water and the lack of it was on everyone's mind. In reviewing some old issues of "Tee to Green" we came across a special "Coping with Less" issue dealing with the drought in 1981. Many of the topics addressed in that issue are still pertinent today. In this issue we are reprinting an article submitted by Ed Worthington dealing with managing turfgrass during a water crisis as well as some other helpful information.

We like to publish some new information pertaining to water and water conservation in future issues. If anyone has some useful information or ideas that they would like to share with others please feel free to contact us about doing an article.

Going one step further we are always looking for information and input as to what things our membership wants covered in the "Tee to Green." Your suggestions and ideas are very important in making this publication a valuable tool to be used by this association. The door is wide open for anyone who would like to help out in any way.

This column is usually reserved for the Presidential address. It has been decided that we will only publish a presidential address when there is important information that Scott feels the association should be aware of. As a rule of thumb, most of the important changes and information happen in the slower times of the year. We feel that this space can be better utilized by our members who have ideas and information to share.

In closing please bear with us as this is a new challenge for us. Each month we learn a little more, become a little better organized and gain experience that we need to improve the "Tee to Green."

Tim Moore
Editor

Turfgrass Maintenance During The Water Crisis

By Ed Worthington

1. Raise height of cut on all mowers to obtain additional shade provided by the longer grass blades which will help to conserve soil moisture.

a. On golf courses, notify the membership that SLOW greens are the order of the day until the crisis is past.

b. Keep all machines off the grass during hot afternoons to reduce tire wilt, machine damage, etc.

c. Adjust mowing schedules so that no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length of the grass blade is removed at every mowing. This will reduce shock to the plant.

2. Your long range problem will be to retain as much soil moisture as possible under your turfgrass areas. In a water crisis, a good long SOIL PROBE can be an important piece of test equipment. Use it daily to check localized dry spots and to find how far down is your drought zone. Start as soon as you can in the spring and

try to keep it at least 1 foot from the surface. Dry soil works up towards the surface — reducing your ground moisture reservoir. When it reaches the root zone, your grass is in trouble. Water applied to a turfgrass area tends to move horizontally with very little vertical penetration until the thatch and ground is thoroughly wet and surface tension is reduced. Methods by which this can be accomplished are as follows:

a. Use a spiker at least once a week just before a rain or set up your sprinkler and use it right after spiking. The water will find a path down the spiker slits through the thatch zone and charge up the ground underneath with moisture.

b. For real problem areas, use an aerifier and work the water into the holes with a hose or sprinkler. Another method would be to use a verticulating machine with 1" spacing on the knives and soak

thoroughly with your sprinkler. Check with your soil probe on all operations.

c. Use a soil penetrant (wetting agent) to help your vertical movement of water through the mat or thatch and ground. Start early and use as directed. Chemical wetting agents, by reducing surface tension, enable water to work down in the soil increasing the soil water reservoir or to help the water work up to the grass root zone as needed.

d. Useful tools for working on localized dry spots include an aerifier with two tines about 8" apart and a handle to hold on to while your foot pushes the tines about $3\frac{1}{2}$ " into the sod. The same idea is an air water aerifier connected to a garden hose with pointed tines that have a couple of holes in them for the water. Finally, a tree root irrigator used by arborists which is connected to high pressure sprayer hose

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Turfgrass Maintenance

(Continued from page 3)

can be useful to force water into compacted soil or for deep penetration of water or solutions.

3. At the turfgrass or playing surface, we have already listed mowing practices to reduce stress and shock at the beginning of this article. To reduce transpiration or evaporation loss, the following suggestions may be helpful:

a. Spray the turfgrass area with a liquid hydrostatic sticker which inhibits water loss and protects against desiccation. It also retards moisture loss on trees, etc. Also, it guards against summer scald and winter kill. If this material or a green turfgrass paint is used, be sure and remove all screens in your sprayer; use tepid water in your tank solution and clean your sprayer, thoroughly, immediately after use.

b. To repair or not to repair machine damage, localized dry spots under drought stress is a good question. Instead of chewing up the area and reseeding, it may be better to spray the area with a

green turfgrass paint and wait until late summer for renovation. On par 3 golf tees, reseed as needed with a fine leaved ryegrass until late summer when a good tee mix should be substituted to form a permanent sod.

c. Mulches on non-playing turfgrass areas can provide additional shade to reduce moisture loss. However, what you use and how much can be a tricky business. Hay mulches may introduce undesirable weed seeds. If applied too thickly, lack of sufficient light will kill the turfgrass underneath or cause disease problems. The right amount of straw would be better, as all you want to do is provide some additional shade, keep weeds down and to let light, air and water down to the turfgrass. Still better, may be plastic netting or woven materials that will accomplish the same purpose but make sure they don't cause more problems than they are worth.

d. Watch your fertilization program carefully. Keep your potash levels up but

be careful about your nitrogen. If you have been using slow release products, remember that N will be released from this type of fertilizer of the ureaform type that was applied up to several years ago. So go easy. If in doubt, use a water soluble type in a sprayer and keep checking your bucket clippings on greens. It may even help to not use your buckets on your greenmowers on a water crisis.

e. In high altitude areas, look out for Spring Kill (Wet Wilt) in late April and May. Beautiful sunny days with a breeze from the North together with low humidity and a cold wet soil can spell disaster. Again, a hydrostatic sticker that retards moisture loss can be very useful during this period. Otherwise, if your pipes are connected, syringe your greens from noon to 3 p.m., just as the fellows down in the valleys must do with their poa annua in July and August. No water? Get your sprayer or tank and fill up somewhere. Then apply to those greens exposed to the northern, low humidity breezes as a syringing operation. Follow the same procedure for syringing poa annua if water is curtailed in your area.

4. Chemical applications of pesticides during stress periods requires planning. Here are some suggestions in a water crisis:

a. Fungus diseases can be a problem during any stress period. Maintain your fungicide schedule even though heights of cut on your mowers have been raised. Use only enough N to help control dollar spot. Check your pH readings and try to stay around 6.5.

b. Insects may become a real problem. Start early on an insecticide program and keep at it. For hard to wet insects, use a spreader-sticker with your insecticide.

c. Herbicides — personally, I never would use them during any stress period.

5. If your water supply may be cut off or reduced, now is the time to think about where you can get water that is safe for turfgrass and how to get it where you want it. Keep your eyes open for any items that might be useful. An old abandoned sprayer might be repaired to hold water. Make sure you have a small pump with suction hose, strainer and discharge

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(continued from page 4)

hose — long enough to reach from your lake, pond, stream, etc. to your carrier, should your irrigation system be cut off.

6. Finally, keep up long range weather reports for your area and keep a daily weather diary. Record also, soil probe moisture depths around the course, etc. Good luck and if all else fails, gather together some good Indian friends and hold a Rain Dance.

Reprinted from *Tee To The Green -*
March 1981

**“God grows
grass till the
4th of July.
After that, it takes
a professional to
keep it alive.”**

Current Status of Water Restrictions for Westchester County

by Ted Horton, CGCS

Late last week I had the opportunity to talk briefly with Sal Celone, Director of Westchester County's Water Agency about the current drought conditions and the possibility of restrictions for water use. Mr. Celone indicated that at this time the New York City and Westchester County Reservoirs were adequately supplied to avoid imposing "County wide" drought emergency procedures for hopefully, the next two to three months. He noted that restrictions imposed to date were usually distribution or pumping problems of local water companies. Of course, if the present dry conditions continue at length, restrictions may be imposed.

At this time Mr. Celone noted that there is a proposed meeting of the

Drought Emergency Task Force scheduled for October, 1988 to discuss the following agenda:

(1) review of the current status of the reservoirs and water use for the county;

(2) review of the short/long range proposals to improve the water resources of the county developed by the study committee initiated during the drought emergency of 1985-86.

(3) review of newly formulated drought emergency procedures for the county considering information learned during the droughts of 1966-67, 1981 and 1985-86.

Hopefully, the rains of this week are the beginning of new weather patterns and that we are going to have a great summer after all.

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Water Shortage Advance Planning

Of critical importance in dealing with a water shortage is the advance planning which must be done to ensure that the best can be made of a bad situation. The golf course superintendent and course officials should agree ahead of time as to the best program to follow. Club members should be forewarned about the

kinds of restrictions that might be placed upon them as the season progresses and they should understand that turf losses will inevitably occur should water use be severely curtailed. When it comes to dealing with the golfer and his course, the best policy is one of no surprises.

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DAVID DWINELL: In Love With St. Andrews

David was the Host Superintendent of the Met GCSA Invitational Tournament

Is it possible to carry on a love affair with a golf course? Sure, if your name is David Michael Dwinell, and the course just happens to be ancient St. Andrews in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York where Dwinell rules the roost as course superintendent.

"It was love at first sight," muses Dwinell. "After all, look what the place had going for itself.

"It was the first golf course in America (100 years old last month); Jack Nicklaus, "Mr. MAJORS" himself was in command, and as chairman of its board of governors, theoretically my boss at the time; the legendary Stanford K. White had designed the clubhouse, and there was more, lots more, of course to tickle the fancy of this green neophyte out of Salem, Mass.

So if tradition, and a certain special sense of golf history was your thing, this was it — right? It was all wrapped up right here in this rolling, picturesque acreage, and its 6,445-yard, par-71 mecca of the midiron, the cradle of golf in America.

"Who wouldn't want to be "super" at St. Andrews? asks Dwinell, who took over officially at the historic site in the spring of '83, after four tough, but satisfying learning years working under first Ted Horton and later Sherwood Moore at Winged Foot Golf Club.

"They were years to treasure," says the big, blond Dwinell. It was the equivalent of earning a doctorate on the job.

"To this point," adds the University of Rhode Island graduate, the past eight years have been the most effective on-the-job training imaginable. "I schooled under masters; two knowledgeable giants, in Horton and Moore, and then arrived at St. Andrews to further school under Mr. Nicklaus at a course that has been completely redesigned and rebuilt to the Master's specifications, of course.

"Who could ask for anything more?" asks Dwinell.

The rangy, 32-year-old readily admits

that were it not for an unexpected invitation from his good friend and fraternity mate at Rhode Island U, Tim O'Neill, the Supt. at the Country Club of Darien, he probably would still be knocking around the Salem-Topsfield area in his native Massachusetts.

"After graduation, Tim came down to work for Paul Caswell, then the super at Greenwich Country Club, and invited me along.

"Try it, you might like the work," Tim said at the time. "And at the suggestion of Caswell, who put me in touch with Ted Horton, I tried it at Winged Foot, and not only liked it, but loved it. The rest is history."

Not quite, David, as Jack Whitaker says to Dave Marr on the TV tube. The learning years in between were designed to test the mantel of the most cynic and determined.

"I never dreamed I could work so hard and enjoy it," says Dwinell in retrospect. Let's face it, I went from the precision and beauty of Winged Foot, to the raw on-the-job-training, schooling and doing at St. Andrews.

"It may have been love at first sight, but there were definitely times when the 'site' was frightening."

Like the spring of 1984, for example, when tons of rain turned St. Andrews into a sea of mud. It was a virtual quagmire from the first tee to the 18th green.

One day in particular, July 7, '84, when seven inches of rain fell in one short period of time, has been burned indelibly in Dave Dwinell's mind. The memory still knocks him out of a sound sleep on occasion.

Every single green was washed out. It was devastating. Nicklaus and Dwinell shared a tear together as they viewed the devastation a day or two later.

"I didn't think I'd stick it out at the time," Dave recalled recently. "It wasn't easy. It would have been easy to walk away and head elsewhere. But the chal-

lenge was compelling. I took it, and with the help of some of the club officials, members, townhouse owners, and especially Mike Kelly, the St. Andrews golf professional, we forged ahead.

But the real crusher was still to come for Super Dave Dwinell. That came late last year when Nicklaus, who took over St. Andrews in the fall of '79, decided he had had enough and lost enough (money), and bailed out of the project, thanks to the financial interest of Chemical Bank.

Since Nicklaus' departure, Dwinell has been the man in charge, and he has achieved near miracle success, and the course is in sparkling condition, including the controversial par-5, 11th hole, which up to a few short weeks ago, had been called everything from an abomination to a monstrosity. It surely has been the most talked-about, most condemned golf hole in captivity.

Dwinell and his gifted crew have worked wonders on the site. As for the controversial 11th hole, they regraded the fairway; opened up a new landing area to the right of the green; built a new carpath along the left side of the fairway, and constructed a stone wall along the entire right side of the 520-yard test.

"The hole could become a gem one day," says Dwinell, who refuses to fault Nicklaus for any of the problems that existed at the site. "Jack's a great designer and a great gentleman. He did the best job he could've, given what he had to work with. The new greens, the trapping are superb.

"When I think back at what we had originally, and what we've accomplished, I fill up with joy and satisfaction," insists Dwinell. "I wouldn't trade the last seven or eight years for anything else in this world. What a glorious experience. It wasn't easy. But thanks to some good old-fashioned hard work, and the help of the Good Lord and Mother Nature, we're making it." And that's the whole truth, according to St. Andrews, of course.

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