

**Now you see him; now you don't!**

It's been one of those superintendent merry-go-round years already. My rolodex and directory are getting worn out with mark-throughs and erasures keeping track

of new addresses for some guys. Scott Wahlin was right in his editorial "Each One of You Will Be Fired at Some Point in Your Career!" Are you ready for this?

Maybe superintendents take on the aura of a new car to some clubs: new, fast, sleek, high performance, king-of-the-road feel. Then you get a little mileage on you. Body gets a couple of dings. Maybe have a flat tire or two. Need a new battery.

Pretty soon the club's thinking, trade-in time! Instead of getting to know the car, they start all over again with a strange new one. There are no guarantees. The next one might be an assembly line lemon. Oh well, trade that one in too!

I was talking to a superintendent last month who relayed the story of his termination over having thin areas on three or four greens. When he tried to explain push-up greens drainage problems, shade and air circulation stresses on greens built in low woody pockets the owner said, "Those are excuses!" And the superintendent said, "I'm not giving you excuses. I'm giving you the facts!"

Well, two superintendents later the club rebuilt the greens, installed fans and cut down some trees. Guess what? They had better greens! The superintendent ran into the owner sometime later and that owner did have the grit to tell him he was right after all! Bittersweet victory I guess! I

wonder if it crossed the owner's mind that he put several men and their families through hell and then out of work for all the wrong reasons?

I'd be a fool to defend every superintendent that ever got the axe. Some of them probably earned the distinction. But, far too many seem to be the result of some over inflated ego on a power trip or a scapegoat for someone else's faulty decision making. It keeps happening again and again so, it is always refreshing to see those clubs and superintendents that have developed a long term, mature, professional working relationship. One where both sides truly understand the ying and yang of growing golf turf under exacting conditions.

Golf course superintendents are expected to operate with less margin for error than any other sports related professional I can think of. Give me a baseball player that gets a hit 40% of the time and I'll show you a guy baseball cards and shoe commercials are made of. Give me a superintendent with 90% of his course perfect and I'll show you a possible candidate for the unemployment line.

Sometimes it isn't about turf, at least not the green growing kind. Sometimes its politics, diplomacy and image. That's why everyone keeps talking about communications and people skills all the time. It's important to be able say, "We have a problem and here's how we can solve it!" before someone else says, "You have a problem! Clear out your desk!"

I don't know of any way to ever stop the merry-go-round. It's destined to be one of the rides you take in life. The only thing I'd say is, "As long as you're on the merry-go-round, be sure and go for the brass ring!"

**Green Side Up**



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