

A Day in the Life...

What superintendents and their crews do from dawn to dusk to dawn



Quarry wall cleaning is a unique maintenance task at the Black Diamond Ranch.
Photo by Laurie Frutchey.

Editor's Note: *There is no such thing as a typical workday in the life of a golf course superintendent because there are no typical golf courses. That's part of the appeal of the game we serve. Every superintendent has thousands of stories to tell. On the following pages, we present a handful which, taken together, indicate the broad range of problems we deal with and the unique solutions crafted by the members of our profession.*

From Darkaphobia to Dilithium Crystals

BY MIKE MONGOVEN, CGCS
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The day in the life of a "dirt farmer," as my wife sometimes affectionately calls me, starts early. Early is a relative term!

The hour most golf course superintendents get cracking is extremely early for your average Joe. John Wayne would be proud of us, because you won't catch many golf course superintendents "burning daylight" as the Duke would say.

One of the biggest challenges we face immediately upon arrival to work is the lack of sunlight. This presents multiple problems which include hiring a staff

that is not overloaded with members that suffer from "darkaphobia," the fear of getting to work too early.

Leadership and experience are critical in managing a staff in the dark. This is a skill that most golf course superintendents will profess to have. In fact, some golf course superintendents will tell you that they are often kept in the dark.

The sunrise is always a beautiful sight. It can also be a bit painful on a Saturday morning after a few too many red pops on Friday night.

The sky lit up in pink, purple, red, blue, peach and whatever is nice. Starting in such a way can put a positive spin on the entire day.

I enjoy seeing the world wake up.

As I look at the day ahead, I generally try to "ride that wave" as they say down under. I occasionally bring my children to work with me on weekends so they can experience the awesomeness of the morning.

As the general population starts to scurry about, the day of a golf course superintendent becomes more difficult. More people means more communication.

This can be difficult and requires much patience, which should not be confused with becoming a patient or making someone else a patient.

Some golfers, and dare I say, some golf professionals can be difficult to deal with from time to time. The community of golf course superintendents tends to be friendly and helpful.

Need help diagnosing a problem? Want advice on equipment? Do you just want someone to listen? There is always a superintendent friend to help during the day.

Wearing many hats is a requirement for a golf course superintendent to have a successful day. Training as a priest, rabbi, motivational speaker, drill sergeant, adult diaper changer, fireman, physician, counselor, mind reader, CPA, agronomist, coach, referee, hydrologist, horticulturist, meteorologist, herbiculturist, mole cricketologist and faith healer are all helpful in the pursuit of excellence.

Stacking all these hats on one's head and showing the talent and skill of the Cat in the Hat to wear them is something that is not taught at The University of Turf. Hopefully, after a few tries and relocations, you will have mastered it.

After a few hours — generally less than 15 — most of us can call it a day. A few hours sleep and it is off to save our piece of the planet for another day. If Scotty could just recharge those dilithium crystals a little quicker, I am sure we could cover more bases tomorrow. 🦊