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**By Vern Putney**

Caddies long formed the base of the game during future pros. Apprenticeship steps were caddiemaster, shop boy and assistant.

Course superintendents were groomed in much the same fashion — hauling hoses, kneading weeds on greens while kneeling on mats, pulling rings, raking traps and adding muscle to maintenance chores. Caddies have thinned to a trickle. Colleges largely furnish the pro talent pouring into golf's money market — the tours. Their expertise is in par-busting, golf's money market — the tours.

Superintendents frequently play with greens chairmen and members, partly to view the course from a player perspective. During this playing tour, things which might never have been brought up can be pointed out and discussed.

For instance, "Why was a tree planted in a certain spot?" In most cases, it was placed for a purpose, to penalize a player who perhaps took too much risk. Chopping a tree without understanding the reason for its presence could lessen the challenge to the course as well as its appeal.

Greens chairmen and members might profit similarly from the superintendent's viewpoint.

"Here's an area that cries for attention? Why can't it be taken care of now?" The reply likely would be, "I've tried to address that problem several times, but the answer always has been, 'We don't have the money.'"

Scores might lack the professional touch, but a few birdsies might be bagged in the area of communication.

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Times turn high-tech, and old (caddie) guard changes

In recent years, DeRocco has been the crack maintenance man at Poland Spring Country Club.

Despite the low pay, long hours and Maine's mercurial weather, none of these three could think of a better way to spend a lifetime. The outdoor work has been healthy, the contacts pleasant. They have met celebrities by the score and goggled with them.

The new breed of superintendents is only not having learned the game "from the ground up," understandably isn't as familiar with the game nor as proficient a player as the ex-caddie.

Many, though, are accomplished players. More than 100 of the 500 competing in the last superintendents' championship were low-handicappers.

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