Witteveen & Bavier's book simply 'magic'

BY TERRY BUCHEN

Legendary golf business guru Gordon C. Witteveen, golf course superintendent at the Board of Trade Country Club in Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada, and Michael R. Bavier of Inverness (Ill.) Golf Club, have been friends for 25 years. They have been literally globetrotting over the last four years teaching and instructing a crash course on golf course maintenance & agronomy appropriately called "The Magic of Greenkeeping."

"Our goal, right from the start, was to teach other greenkeepers the practical side of golf course maintenance/management, sharing our experiences with our audience and interacting to get other practical ideas to share with everyone in attendance," said Bavier. "We teach four to five seminars a year worldwide, during the off-season, by sharing our ideas as we are two very experienced superintendents. The interaction with the younger seminar participants keeps new ideas flowing in our teachings along with proven ideas that we have used. We love interacting with people from all over the world and have had good reactions from our seminar participants.

"We took the seminars one step further by writing this book to share all of the practical, common sense ideas, in a not too technical way, so course officials or golf course maintenance supervisors/employees can learn from our experiences," Witteveen said. "We wrote 90 percent of the book, after conferring with Michael, who also implemented and administered most of the seminars. We are teaching what we think is the right way to perform golf course management in our book and while some people might not agree with all of its content it still makes for interesting reading."

The book has some great pictures that really help tell the maintenance story in each of the chapter titles, which include: Cutting Greens, Tees, Fairways; The 19th Hole: The Caterer; Water; Fertilizer; Topdressing, Aerating; Spraying; Fungicides & Tee Markers; Drainage; Turf Grades & Turfing; Trees; Landscaping; Managing People; The Tools; The Turf Care Center and most interestingly The Deadly Sins & The Super-Sups!

"Writing of The Deadly Sins chapter provides some insight into the superintendent's profession in the past and for the future as well. The Super Sups chapter gives a few examples of the best," Bavier said.

While I was reading this book — which is easy reading, in a not too technical fashion — it seemed to flow nicely, from Witteveen's writing style from his many years of maintaining, supervising, writing magazine articles, making it fun to read in the linguistics of a golf course superintendent. Green committee chairpersons, assistant superintendents, maintenance employees & turfgrass college students will get a lot out of this book as this type of practical, common-sense information is not available in many other technical books currently on the market.

Reading this book is like being in a classroom with these two acknowledged superintendents, who will share many of their experiences with their constituents in a friendly and sometimes humorous manner. Of particular interest is the book gets into a story telling mode, which makes the reader feel like he or she is talking with the authors. The book's golf course management practices, at their respective clubs, are proven winners and their use of time honored management traditions, which have been modernized and accepted practices, is well worth reading.

On a personal note, it is very gratifying to witness golf course superintendents writing books from the practical, experienced point of view which is a great way to learn from "the school of hard knocks," while leaving a lasting legacy for future turfgrass managers to enjoy. Stanley Metsker, CGCS, started the modern trend of superintendents preserving their legacy in 1997, which I hope will continue.