

KEEP YOUR COMMITTEES INFORMED

Will Progress Reports Work for You?

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I have written monthly reports for many years at my club, and for me they have been a tremendous success. They have provided my committee and board members with information about some of the fundamental steps we have had to take in greenkeeping and administration in order to give the members a top-flight course. A copy of the report was also sent to the women's chairman.

This monthly correspondence through progress reports makes my job of golf course maintenance a lot easier to carry out. Here is basically what the progress reports accomplished for me.

First, they are a summary of what is done during the month and catalog weather conditions and maintenance procedures that could be referred to whenever necessary. Second, a copy of this report is given to the pro and manager to keep them informed as to what is being done in my department. This also gives them a schedule of some of the future projects that might correlate with some of their events.

But most important, progress reports are a means of educating greens committee members to what is going on in my department. The committee members, when thus well-informed, then work with me in

promoting understanding among other interested club members regarding our operations. This kind of support is of great assistance to a superintendent, especially in the crucial periods of summer.

I set up my progress reports usually under these headings — weather, greens, tees, fairways and porridge potpourri. The last is anything that comes into my head that I think might be of special interest to my green committee and I usually try to keep it in a light vein. Sometimes there are additional headings such as rough, traps, landscape or construction.

Let me give you some examples. Let's start with weather. From one of my reports:

March is the most unpredictable month in the calendar and certainly wins the award for the most capricious month of the year. This March was divided into beautiful weather, cold weather and wet weather, almost in equal parts, which is normal for Chicago.

From a greens report:

The greens have been fertilized with a urea form 38-0-0 nitrogen. Brushes were put on Tuesday, May 23. We are pleased to observe that very little grain is being brushed up by the greensmowers. Each year they get better. Our greens are much tighter now, and considerably less grainy.

This can be attributed directly to frequent low mowing, slow feeding, aerifying and heavy topdressing, such as we accomplished last autumn. The greens are cut slightly under $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch right through the season.

From a fairways report:

Fertilized fairways with 16-8-8 approximately 270 pounds per acre. The fertilizer also contained the chemical dieldrin for control of earthworms. Earthworms are wonderful in the garden but not on the low-mowed acres of a golf course where their earth mounds sometimes interfere with play.

From a tees report:

The tees have been fertilized with 18-4-6 fertilizer and are mowed at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. They look superb. Briarwood has the largest tees in the Chicagoland area and their tremendous size makes them especially attractive to the eye — and a little scary when the tee markers are in the back. Unlike other courses, our large tees never have that beat-up, worn-out look. Because the tee markers can be moved many places, this advantage justifies their extra cost and maintenance.

From a traps report:

The power rake and cadet

Progress Reports continued

tractor that has been added to our equipment inventory is one of the best purchases we have ever made. It is such a labor saver and does such a remarkable job in the traps that consideration should be made to get another one this fall (we now have two). That way, two men in half a day

after a rain or before an important event or a holiday can get all the traps raked — which is a remarkable feat.

From a porridge potpourri:

(1) If everybody we talk to adamantly informs us that they repair their ball marks, and those of five others besides, who are the golfers who do not? We must have an irre-

sponsible phantom golfer somewhere. The greens are becoming very pock-marked going into the summer.

(2) Ladies' guest day was a big success with compliments to the grounds department for using potted geraniums in place of tee markers.

(3) The duck hens are nesting quietly by the No. 3 lake, and we have erected a sign that says, "Quiet, Duck Maternity Ward!"

Finally, from a report entitled "house cleaning:"

Our crew has raked and picked up branches and debris on greens, tees and fairways. We then spent a week at the clubhouse, power-broom sweeping, hand sweeping, raking and hauling away debris to a dump. Time was also spent cleaning up paper along Waukegan and Deerfield roads. We carry out this cleaning program each spring and feel that nothing makes a golfer feel better or more impressed than finding tidy clubhouse grounds and a clean golf course when he first comes out in the spring.

I especially recommend this aid to management highly for all young superintendents starting at new jobs and for all superintendents presently having difficulty communicating with their membership. It is not a panacea for success at a country club, but it is a good communication step in the right direction and takes little effort. However, there is no replacement for doing a good job on the course. Hard work comes first. Progress reports come second.

However, I must admit that after 15 years at Briarwood, I do not write progress reports as frequently as I used to. I now usually submit only a spring and fall report to my green chairman and green committee and sometimes also to the board of governors. Here are some excerpts from my most recent spring report:

"Spring play. Every year about this time there comes a short spell when the ground suddenly begins to thaw out and frost starts to come out. The exact time depends on key factors such as depth of frost and the occurrence of warm tempera-

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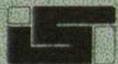
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tures and winds. The important thing to understand when this phenomenon occurs is the ground becomes very soggy and boggy, especially on the greens. Any traffic at this thawing time compacts the putting surface, severely damaging the root system and leaving depressions which sometimes will not come out. They exist all through the season covered over by the creeping bentgrass. To prevent this damage from occurring on the course, we will close the course until the greens firm up. This closing (a couple of days) usually happens when the days are balmy and warm and everyone is raring to play. But it is one time that closing the course really helps and one of those rare times that we must do so.

"Tiling. This was another lucky time for our new tiling. As soon as the contractor finished the prescribed tiling it rained and rained and rained. There would have existed turf killing ice or water now in

all the low spots instead of dry ground where the new tiling was put in. As soon as the weather becomes favorable, the contractor (10 percent of his fee was held back) will return to fill in and level the narrow trenches and reset carefully all the new catch basins, after which our crew will seed, fertilize and spread a thin layer of peat moss to shelter the seed until it comes up. The plan to pick up the sod and replace it in the spring did not materialize because the ground was frozen when the winter tiling was done and besides the scraggly turf in these low areas was not worth picking up anyway.

"Tulips-Crocuses. Every third autumn we plant tulips in the circle by the practice tee and also in back of No. 1 tee. Last fall we did some extra planting which I believe will delight our members' eyes. Whenever diseased elms were taken down near the clubhouse area and the stumps chipped down, we planted tulips and crocuses close together. Normally these stump areas are just filled with soil and seeded (which we did again) but since the Kentucky

bluegrass will not show anything until late May or so, we thought we would show something a little earlier. Let's hope there was no damage done to the bulbs over the winter."

Progress reports do one other thing. They provide a sort of psychological therapy. By this, I mean that by writing out your feelings, your frustrations and your achievements on paper and sharing them with someone else, you are getting certain job worries off your chest by explaining what you are doing. As I mentioned before, this type of thing can be especially helpful to the younger superintendent just starting out. By sharing your problems with others, you are getting things out of your system. This is healthy.

In a progress report, relay your anticipated problems and headaches, and also your achievements. And add a little humor now and then. Nobody wants to read a ponderous, doomsday report. And by all means, do not take yourself too seriously all the time in the report. □

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