

# Viewpoint

## What is a greens chairman?

In our profession there is one man that at some point in time comes up in a conversation. This discussion sometimes takes an uncomplimentary direction, with superintendents using very descriptive language and saying where the individual can take the job of superintendent and stuff it. But as superintendents, perhaps we should try harder to understand the person who would want this position, what motivates this person, and the pressures he faces just to be called "greens chairman."

What is a greens chairman? He is generally a club champion, a present or past board member or a self-studied agronomist turned golfer and club member. At the beginning of his term, the greens chairman usually knows very little about what it actually takes to develop and maintain a golf course. He comes into the position with what he feels is good experience: the ability to grow a beautiful lawn at home, to win the club tournament, championship or to run a very profitable business. We as superintendents

know this alone does not make a good greens chairman.

The greens chairman must understand that the superintendent's business of growing grass which will stand up to a trampling herd such as the LPGA Open, your local club tournament, or even normal play is not an easy position to hold. He must also understand that now, whether he likes it or not, he is a loner. If he sides with the club members, he will have difficulty communicating with the superintendent; and if he sides with the superintendent, he will be called a traitor by the members.

After talking with several greens chairmen, I have found that a very common response is, "I really didn't know what all it took to be a superintendent." There are a few of those chairmen who serve their terms and still do not know what it takes. Those are the chairmen we don't want back. However, there are still a greater number of greens chairmen who understand the superintendents' position and work very closely with him for the betterment of the club.

There are two types of greens chairmen. The first is a know-it-all who is ready to change the superintendent and push for his own ideas. He already has in mind what the superintendent is doing wrong and how it can be changed. He usually has a great number of suggestions from the membership concerning course improvements. He also

talks to other local greens chairmen and brings back a list of possible changes for his club. The problem with this type is that he doesn't understand the superintendents position and he isn't willing to learn. Fortunately, this type of chairman is small in number, and we as superintendents should hope his number decreases even more.

The second type is an individual who still has very definite ideas about what it takes to run a golf course; however, the difference is that he comes into the job with open eyes and ears. Usually this man will weed out the membership's suggestions by eliminating the absurd and passing on the possible ones to the superintendent. He also tries to learn more about what the superintendent is up against.

We as superintendents can work well with the second type of greens chairman. When discussing problems with him, we must remember he is not a fellow superintendent; he is an outsider willing to help us. We must educate him to a point that he will have a deeper insight into our problems. By doing this, we may be able to make our job just a little bit easier.

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