Viewpoint

Professional to superintendent: “let’s cooperate”

The essence of communication and cooperation between the superintendent and the head professional is teamwork: a team effort for a well-manicured golf course. Only through teamwork will the golf course be what both persons want it to be, and then what the player wants it to be.

Both the superintendent and the professional have important input for the betterment of the course. The superintendent should be qualified to give that input from years of experience and proper training from qualified teachers, such as previous superintendents at other golf courses. Training and turfgrass knowledge is also received through possible inspections and recommendations by the USGA Green Section. The superintendent gains invaluable information through dealings with the Green Section.

The professional mainly derives his input through the eyes of a golfer, and sometimes sees problems that the superintendent does not. The professional has a few sources:

1) Written messages, such as memorandums, clearly state the message so both parties understand what is to be done, and possibly recommendations as to the procedure or time period when it should be implemented.

2) Course inspections. Periodically the pro and the superintendent should inspect the entire golf course. By inspecting the course together, both persons can see first hand improvements that are in the process and areas that need to be corrected or improved.

Communication and cooperation between professional and superintendent is most important. Communication as to the timing of the winter seeding program is a good example. There is usually a 4- or 5-week period that is the optimum time to reseed the golf course with winter ryegrass or other type of seed. The superintendent will know within a couple of days when to start this program. If the professional has arranged for an important tournament on the day that the seeding program is starting, there will be a conflict.

Communication and teamwork would be able to resolve this problem. One way to insure that the reseeding does not start too soon; or that the course is in the best condition possible, is to send the superintendent a calendar of events for each month. This way the superintendent will have time to get certain problem areas taken care of and will have the course looking good.

There are a couple of different arrangements as to the working relationships between the superintendent and the professional. At some clubs the head professional is the superintendent’s boss, and at some courses (like city or county courses) the superintendent does not have to answer to the head professional for anything. The latter situation makes it tougher for good communication and cooperation, but in order for the facility to run smoothly, the teamwork is still needed very badly. You may need to sit down over lunch and talk things out, or whatever is necessary in order to get that good working relationship. A smooth running operation combined with a well-manicured golf course make for an excellent golf facility, a goal for which all should strive.