

The electronic mailbag was virtually bulging last month with e-mails from readers who weren't thrilled with Geoff Shackelford's column, "Dumb and Dumber, Superintendent Style" (May/June).

Those who took the time to write thought the column was an unfair and uneducated "Shack Attack" on their professional practices. Some were downright hot. Others offered reasoned rebuttals to Geoff's list of annoying practices. Conversely, on the GCSAA Web site and TurfNet, some superintendents fessed up and said, "guilty as charged" to at least some items on Geoff's list. Some suggested that their concerned colleagues should "lighten up."

We even caught flack from members of our own Golfdom Advisory Staff, which consists of a cross section of about 20 superintendents and architects who evaluate the magazine monthly.

Reviews of the column ranged from: "A must read for every superintendent" to "The truth hurts" to "Two thumbs down and a big middle finger." Kind of a mix of opinions, huh?

Well, folks, welcome to Golfdom.

Whiners as customers

It's important to note that Geoff did not invent his "dumb things" list out of thin air, nor were the items merely his personal observations.

He talked to a number of leading superintendents who described the typical gripes they hear from players. He then used humor and exaggeration to portray the world through the eyes of the average whiny golfer.

So — and we hoped this was obvious — "Dumb and Dumber" was not meant to be some kind of broad indictment of the profession. It was meant to be a funny but sobering reminder that the great majority of golfers remain blissfully ignorant about maintenance practices.

And, unfortunately, their ignorance is *your* problem. Why? Because — like it or not — those whiners are your *customers*. In simplest terms, they are the people who consume what you produce. If your product doesn't meet their unenlightened expectations, they will go someplace else. You don't need an MBA from Harvard to know that's a bad thing at a time when competition for players is heating up.

Enlightening the Whiners

BY PAT JONES



SOMETIMES, OUT
OF CONTROVERSY
COMES
UNDERSTANDING

The challenge is to enlighten the whiners and manage their expectations through regular and effective communications. It doesn't need to be fancy. You can use the club newsletter and calendar, bulletin boards, comment cards, signage, cart notices and face time in the pro shop to get your messages across. GCSAA, local chapters and the Green Section all provide posters, signs and other tools available to help you. But it's up to you to use them. In short, as a wise person once said: "Light a candle rather than curse the darkness."

The new gospel

In my first Flagstick column, I made a series of promises to our readers. Among them were that we wouldn't shy from controversy and we wouldn't always be politically correct.

Well, we knew Geoff's column would stir up some controversy, but we also knew that it would challenge readers to think about how their practices are perceived by golfers. Sometimes, out of controversy comes understanding.

We also knew that the column wasn't politically correct. The PC thing to do would have been to publish yet another teeth-gnashing account of how frustrating it is that golfers don't appreciate the efforts of superintendents. We could have even trotted out a famous PGA Tour player (ooh!) to pay tribute to "the unsung heroes of the game" and to tell you how important you are.

Well, as warm and fuzzy as that would be, the choir has already heard that sermon every Sunday for decades. So, we brought in a relief preacher from the bullpen to fire up the congregation. That's why Golfdom is different. We're not afraid to preach a new gospel.

Can I get an "Amen"?

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