

Congratulations. You've finally landed your first assignment as a superintendent after spending all that time being someone else's grunt. With diploma in hand and experience under your belt, you stroll into the maintenance facility on your first day full of hope and fresh ideas. The crew gives you only a lukewarm welcome since you're the new guy and couldn't possibly know any more than they do.

Little by little, though, you break down their resistance and learn about the things that happened before you. You discover what worked and what didn't, and you plug those discoveries into a success formula of your own.

The ownership seems excited about having a new superintendent, and welcomes your enthusiasm and suggestions for improvement. After a tour around the course with the owner and pro, it's obvious that this little, old golf course has seen better days, and you are bound and determined to bring those days back. After all the years of neglect, raising the standard around here will be a piece of cake.

Wait a minute. Hold that thought right there. Are you thinking what I think you're thinking? Do you think you can just waltz in to this new position, lay down a few stripes, rake a few bunkers, make a few improvements and be the club hero?

Well, think again, my friend. I'm here to tell you that before you can go around raising club standards to your own levels, you had better be in fine tune with what standards the club can handle. It's one thing to come in and make improvements, elevating the quality of conditioning to acceptable levels. But it's another thing to go around raising standards without first giving it some serious consideration.

What you must realize is that you're raising the club's expectation of your performance by raising the standard of the club's condition and quality. Unfortunately, some clubs will not understand that there's a limit to the quality you can achieve with the resources your club is able (or willing) to provide.

After you've raised the bar as high as it can go, they will not understand that it's unfair of them to expect you to raise it even higher without first giving you more to work with.

Raising the Bar? Just be Careful

BY JIM BLACK



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With that in mind, I'd like to offer new and future superintendents a few things to think about and help them determine the factors that make up the standards of the clubs they might be joining.

■ **Budget considerations.** You must realize there may not even be a set budget at some small clubs, which are more pay-as-you-go operations.

■ **Labor restrictions.** How big of a staff will you be allowed to work with and what is the quality of that staff? Will it be a 12-person crew comprised mostly of high-school kids making slightly above minimum wage who couldn't care less about what they're doing? Or will it be an eight-person crew with adults who pay attention, follow directions and have a conscious awareness about the paying customers?

■ **Equipment concerns.** How much can you realistically accomplish with the equipment you have, and what will the club allow as far as equipment upgrades?

■ **Member/customer expectations.** What is more important to your main clientele — green speed or green turf? If the word "Stimpmeter" is heard in many conversations, prepare yourself for mind-numbing comments like, "I don't see why our greens can't be as fast as Augusta's."

■ **Owners' expectations.** Learn as much as you can about your owner's knowledge of the golf business without being nosy about his business. Get a good feel about his level of respect for your position.

Unless you are in a position to make changes for the better, I suggest you keep your elevation-of-standards efforts in check — or you just may elevate yourself right out of a job.

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