

Over
75 Years
of Turf
Stewardship

- Proven Results
- Cost Effective
- Environmentally Friendly

For Better Results.
Naturally.

Milorganite®

www.milorganite.com
1-800-287-9645

Off The Fringe

What They Don't Teach You in School

SUPERINTENDENT OFFERS TIPS ON INTERACTING WITH GOLFERS

By Charlie Fultz

Many times during my travels in the golf course industry, fellow superintendents have commented on things they've encountered that they had never been taught in college how to handle. For instance, daily interaction with golfers on your golf course is one issue that is seldom covered in class, yet it's one that every superintendent needs experience in to become a true professional.

Just the other day, my assistant came off the course more than a little upset. A foursome had pulled their golf cars off of the cart path around the greens despite the many signs posted around our course asking for golfers to keep cars on the paths around all greens and tees. When my assistant politely asked the golfers to follow this posted rule, one person in this foursome became confrontational. My assistant came back to the shop to find me and muttered, "This is something they definitely don't teach you in school."

How true.

Learning to effectively communicate with golfers is key to a superintendent's success in this industry. In fact, tactful communication may be the key to your survival, since the golfer you upset today may be on the golf course board of directors tomorrow deciding your fate. So, how can you diplomatically enforce your rules and regulations to help keep your course in good shape?

■ For starters, request help from your pro shop. Sit down with your golf pro in the off-season and explain why you need his or her help. If you're both on the same page, your golf pro

should be willing to help you, if only for the better of the organization. Ask the golf pro to explain to golfers what is expected during their rounds that day before they start. Starters (if you have them) can then reinforce what comes from your pro shop. Marshals are also helpful in dealing with golfers.

■ Proper signage will also help. Keep easily visible signs posted in places where they can't be missed.

■ Being proactive with your maintenance staff will also help. Your staff can be just as effective as you are in policing your golf course, especially if you establish guidelines in how to do so. But be careful with this. If there's a chance for a confrontation, instruct your staff to walk away from it to find you to handle the situation.

Also, as you tour your facility during the day checking on staff and such, be active in enforcing your course's rules. Expectations from the golfers will begin to change for the better if everyone is on the same page.

In the situation that my assistant faced, I went out onto the course and found the foursome. I then asked the group to please follow the signage on the golf course. I let them know that it helped us maintain the course better for them and that the hard work put in by my staff was being jeopardized. They said they were sorry.

I know that golfer etiquette isn't what we would hope it would be, but we can help mold it if we are proactive in enforcing regulations and rules on our own courses. Once golfers see it and hear it often enough, we can hope that they will see and hear what we are trying to do.

Charlie Fultz is superintendent of The Shenvallee Golf Resort in New Market, Va.

