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**MATT NEFF**, *assistant superintendent, Wedgewood G&CC, Powell, Ohio*

## What you can control

If it's true that when the going gets tough, the tough get going, then those of us in the golf course maintenance industry haven't stopped going for the past several years. With the country's economic woes having a dramatic effect on the golf industry, and the extreme weather conditions that have been seen in many parts of the country over the last few years, it has indeed been a difficult time to be in this business.

One of the often-mentioned consequences of the recession has been the loss of golf courses, and thus, job opportunities. As a result of these lost opportunities, many assistant golf course superintendents are struggling to take the next step in their careers.

We've all heard that we need to network, make our résumés stand out, create personal websites, etc. We should do some or all of these things, but we have no control over the end result of these efforts. It's all great advice, but doing these things

guarantees nothing except that we could end up spending a ton of time and money on networking opportunities, résumé services, and website design only to be in the exact same place three years from now, albeit with one fancy website that gets visited maybe a dozen times a year.

But there is one aspect of this career stalemate that we can control and even use to our advantage. We can use this additional time as assistant superintendents to become even better at what we do and ultimately become better superintendents when our time finally comes.

We have our routines down — as much as it's possible to

in this business. We know the course, the crew and our superintendent's expectations. And, now that we're no longer consumed with figuring out the basics, we have the opportunity to focus on the finer points of this profession.

We can concentrate more on the effects of agronomic programs and practices, management and budgeting skills, communication skills, and even learning more about how the other departments within the club function.

To take the next step, we are going to have to convince someone that we have most of the answers and know how to figure out the rest. This additional time provides us with an invaluable opportunity to become even better prepared for the day we become

superintendents. I've heard it said before that moving up to a superintendent can be a bit nerve-racking at first. Further honing our skills and knowledge can reduce the stress associated with the transition and the learning curve that comes with a new job and, likely, a new course.

Equally as important as focusing on how to better equip ourselves for future success is remembering that we presently have a job to do. Like me, you may have found yourself occasionally wondering if the frequently unrelenting schedule that we all keep is worth it, given the lack of advancement opportunities. But we need to be keenly aware that our superintendents are still counting on us to get the job done every day and to set an example for the crew. A bad attitude from a supervisor can spread like wildfire, especially when the days get long and everyone is tired.

While we may not always be happy with the rate at which our careers are progressing, we are still doing the job we love. Every day we have the opportunity to learn more and every day we are presented the challenge of being better than the day before.

That keeps me fired up and, if you're in a similar career situation, I hope it helps you, too.

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