

"the golf course superintendent"

(His Qualifications - His Responsibilities - His Requirements)

This article was written to acquaint the golfer with the Golf Course Superintendent and to promote understanding between golfers and the men who have been entrusted with the finest and most valuable turf in the world.

PROFESSIONALISM

There is typically one individual directly responsible for the playing conditions of our modern golf courses. Although the title varies, this individual is generally known as the GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT. He joins and cooperates with the Club House Manager and the Club Professional in providing the best possible facilities for playing the game of golf. In this respect the Golf Course Superintendent is charged with managing the entire area where golf is played.

As with most professionals, the stature and knowledge he enjoys today, were not easily achieved. Near the turn of the century, young men from rural areas with farm background began to migrate into the metropolitan areas and seek work at golf courses as what was then known as green keepers. There he was in his own element, and through a combination of experience and pure instinct, he began to adapt his knowledge to the business of maintaining golf turf. Of course, golf courses of that period did not compare with the courses of today. The green keeper of that period was less knowledgeable, tools were less sophisticated, but as the demand increased the equipment was greatly improved, the green keeper became more knowledgeable and as a result the courses provided much better turf and playing conditions.

As the popularity of golf rose sharply in the 1920s there was a greater need for greenkeepers who could and would accept the challenges of the increased player traffic and the players' demands for higher quality playing conditions. As these conditions increased and the men who accepted the challenge became more knowledgeable the business of greenkeeping became a profession and has taken its place in the world along with other professions.

To better understand the complexities of this profession today, we will describe, in the following paragraphs, the Golf Course Superintendent's qualifications, responsibilities and requirements. Hopefully it will result in a finer appreciation and relationship between those who play golf as a recreation or profession and the Golf Course Superintendent.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S QUALIFICATIONS

Although the Golf Course Superintendent's main concern is that of growing golf turf, he is more and more becoming directly involved in the management of the entire golf course facility. In addition to having an agronomic education, it is a valuable asset if he has additional education in what at first would seem unrelated areas, such as business administration, education or engineering.

To be more specific, the Superintendent must be familiar with the many facets of golf courses, and how they relate to the game of golf. To produce and maintain the specialized turfgrass required, he must have a knowledge of the available types and varieties of turfgrass as well as possessing the technical information required to produce the desired results. He must know and understand the complexities and interrelationships of soils, fertilizers, irrigation drainage, insects, insecticides, turf diseases, fungicides, weeds, herbicides, tools and equipment ranging from hand tools to complex hydraulically-operated fairway mowing units.

He must be able to secure, train and supervise labor and work intelligently with his employees and employers. He must keep accurate and complete records on all aspects of his job. He must know how and where to obtain information re-

lating to all aspects of his job and he must read technical publications almost constantly to keep pace with the rapid developments in his field.

The Golf Course Superintendent's personal characteristics must include integrity, understanding and humility. As the trusted custodian of much of the course's property, the Superintendent's integrity will dictate that he must do what is good for the course, not what may seem best for his personal interests. He must have an understanding of the golfer's feelings, which enables him to accept the blame for missed putts, lost balls and "unplayable" lies.

Working with forces of nature tends to instill a great sense of humility in most men, and consequently requires that they be flexible in their planning and actions. Superintendents know full well that their best planning can easily be altered or reversed by a natural phenomenon such as drought, flood, insects or disease. Therefore, he will continue with his original plan as long as possible, keeping in mind that the need to react immediately is ever present.

Add to these qualifications the knowledge required to deal with the problem related to roadways, trees, flowers, buildings, tennis courts, skeet ranges or other maintenance phases of a golf course, and it becomes more apparent that the Golf Course Superintendent carries a tremendous responsibility in presenting pleasurable recreation facilities.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

Because of widely differing circumstances it is difficult to fully itemize the Superintendent's professional responsibilities.

Local conditions and factors, including geographic-climate location and number of holes to the history and organization of each course must be considered. Naturally, there are many common areas of responsibility for all Superintendents, but there are also many localized aspects.

A commonly held misconception is that the Golf Course Superintendent is always directly responsible to the clubhouse manager or the golf professional for the management of the golf course playing area. In fact, these three parties are usually individually responsible for their distinct areas of management, which when combined will result in the total operation of the clubhouse facilities, pro shop and golf course.

Most clubs have a "green committee" and the Golf Course Superintendent will work and be responsible to this committee.

We will list 11 areas of responsibility that should be included in the Golf Course Superintendent's responsibilities:

- (1) Golf Course Management (the entire playing surface of the course, to include the tees, fairways, roughs, greens and surrounding areas)
- (2) Area Management (entrance roads, parking lots, practice putting green and driving range)
- (3) Landscaping (planning, planting and removal)
- (4) Structures (buildings, fences, bridges and shelters)
- (5) Equipment (purchase, storage, inventory and maintenance)
- (6) Personnel (working staff, procurement, training and supervision)
- (7) Materials (purchase, storage, inventory and application)
- (8) Budget (preparation, explanation and execution)
- (9) Record Keeping (expenses, weather, material application and inventories)
- (10) Knowledge of Golf (participation, rules and regulations)
- (11) Reporting and Advising (periodic contact with "green committee" and golfers)

All of these responsibilities are of great importance. Each one is a sort of a natural, however, there is one, Number 10, that is a little different than the others in that it might seem that it does not have any direct connection with the growing of turf, grass or with the maintenance of the tees, greens, fairways, etc., but actually it does. If the Superintendent knows the rules it

(continued on page 10)

SUPERINTENDENT'S QUALIFICATIONS, ETC. (cont'd from page 3)

will be of a great benefit to him and his staff in the cutting of the fairways, greens and tees, the placement of the cups on the greens, the placing of the tee markers, the marking of the water hazards, the lateral water hazards, out of bounds, ground under repair etc. Also to aid him in doing the afore-mentioned items it will be of great benefit for the Superintendent to play a round of golf, at least once a month and more often if possible, with the chairman of the green committee. It will give him first hand practical knowledge and will enable him to discuss problems more intelligently with the various committees and players.

As stated before, the specific responsibilities of a Golf Course Superintendent will vary greatly, however, in general terms the Superintendent's main responsibility is to provide the players with the finest possible playing conditions.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S REQUIREMENTS

The business practices of golf courses, such as, purchasing, accounting, finances and personnel vary considerably and one Superintendent may approach the problems in a different manner; there are basic rules and practices that exist and must be followed by the Superintendent if he is to accomplish the best results.

Among the important requirements of a Superintendent is that he have complete opportunities to work with and assist with committees in the planning stages of major programs. Many good ideas pertaining to potential changes in the course originate informally; they can best reach material accomplishment under the guidance of a well coordinated committee and Superintendent. In many cases thousands of dollars have been wasted and much dissatisfaction caused by unwise decision and action taken without the full knowledge of the Superintendent. Making the most of a Superintendent's skill and knowledge has been proven to be the most successful and efficient manner of operating a golf course.

Another requirement that is advantageous to both the course and the Superintendent is to have an agreed upon long-term golf course development program. Then establishing a procedure which will afford the Superintendent the means of implementing that program.

The Superintendent should be given the opportunity to continue his education in his chosen profession. Superintendents should attend conferences and meetings where the results of current research findings are reported and explained. Membership in professional organizations in his field is a valuable asset to the Superintendent as through these organizations he learns that experiences and problem-solving methods are exchanged for the betterment of both the individual and the course.

The Superintendent should welcome suggestions, from club members, directed toward the improvement of the course. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that the Superintendent is the technical expert on golf course management, and that those phases of the operation should be placed directly in his hands.

Cooperation and coordination are key words whenever a Superintendent's requirements are being discussed. Although he cannot rely upon the cooperation of the weather or other natural elements, he should be able to depend upon his employer and golfers. As stated earlier, flexibility is a necessity for Golf Course Superintendents, but for sake of a high quality course, all concerned should cooperate and coordinate with one another.

The Golf Course Superintendent is a man of many hats and therefore must be versed in agronomy, horticulture, entomology, plant pathology, landscape architecture, construction, accounting, meteorology, civil engineering and mechanics, as well as public and labor relations.

The qualification, responsibilities and requirements of a Superintendent will vary tremendously from course to course, but the basic aspects will always be present in one form or another.