

# The Unsung Hero of Golf

by Bert Yancey

On Hilton Head Island, we are extremely fortunate to have 18 of the most beautifully manicured golf courses found anywhere. Somewhere on the courses that we love and enjoy are a group of the most efficient, dynamic and unheralded men in the golfing world. Behind the scenes, the golf course superintendent quietly and effectively does his job.

He is versed in diplomacy and bridgebuilding; the rules of golf and county regulations on effluent water usage; horticulture and psychology. He is aware of the indomitable forces of nature and sensitive to the feelings of young men and women.

He can take a two-cylinder engine apart and put it back together, or diagnose an early illness in a giant loblolly pine. He must understand daily budget controls and accounting principles as well as what motivates an employee to do his best work.

This man takes swift action in any situation, from hydraulic leaks to dripping faucets. He may appear from the depths of a muddy hole, wherein lies a nest of colored wires, and look like a mountain man who just lost a fight with a grizzly; then two hours later walk into a high-level staff meeting immaculate and ready to face a Madison Avenue crowd.

He looks at a stand of overseeded winter grass that seems matted and sick and smiles within, secure in the knowledge that in two weeks it will look like an emerald carpet. Then later, when the carpet is cut with eight whirling blades at 7-32 of an inch, he knows if one blade is out of synchronization.

He accepts the burden of seeding winter grasses in the fall to cover the brown, almost dormant Bermuda; he has his own personal rye and knows exactly how to prepare the surface. Too much perennial rye, and the winter's glorious color will retard the spring bloom of Bermuda; too little rye will give a sickly spotted and striped effect. Reluctantly, he rolls the dice of winter overseeding and patiently hopes for a little luck with the unpredictable weather.

He spends many an afternoon playing a few holes trying to improve his own game while he evaluates the course. He knows that even the best of golfers play better on well-groomed courses, though most of them don't know exactly why.

This man rises before dawn to spend each morning with his crew, making sure the greens are cut and the traps raked before the first foursome tees off. He owns no

alarm clock, reads an architectural map with ease, and may have attended Penn State or the school of hard knocks. With the ease of a diplomat he can direct a Governor not to practice too close to a sprinkler head.

He commands the respect of his men like Robert E. Lee, and bleeds every time a player steps out of a sand trap and breaks its clean edge. He is a great man, the unsung hero of golf, the golf course superintendent.

There's a little superintendent in everyone who loves the game. They respect the course, they don't break branches or drag their feet across the greens. They step over the trap edges and fix two ballmarks on every green. They would never drive a cart on the bank of a tee or the slope of a green.

So be careful as you drive your cart, and if you see a mountain man climb out of a jeep while you're out playing, don't just smile or nod . . . raise your right hand and clench your fist; it will be sincerely appreciated.

CREDIT: THE GREENER SIDE, ED WALSH, CGCS, EDITOR

"Super course, eh, Jim"

"Yes, P.J. . . . and Super Superintendent, of course!"



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