



## In Bounds: I Love What I Do

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The days have begun to cool and hours shorten as I prepare to shift gears toward a slower pace. And as I begin the slow slide into fall I am afforded the time to reflect upon the successes and failures of the previous summer. What started as a season of blissful harmony became perhaps one of the most challenging summers of my career.

Opening to near perfection can have an interesting effect on the psyche of many superintendents, me included. Rather than play catch up and recovery, it was balls to the wall, summer time is here! And rather than gradually waltzing into summer expectations, it seemed that the lush turf accelerated the demands of many players.

Of course, I have even higher expectations than my worst critic! Through early July turf management was pleasant, however the tempest of Mother Nature disguised as drought and intense heat seared my course and challenged my superintendent skills. Early days and late nights were the norm and at times I wondered why I torture myself on such a continuous basis.

**Simply put, I love what I do.** But to pinpoint the reasons is somewhat elusive. It has to be more than the rainbows and sunrises. The smell of fresh-cut grass and the sound of morning silence.

Upon reflection, having the autonomy of being my own boss is perhaps the greatest allure of my position. Of course I have a General Manager and Board of Directors who think they control my destiny, but in reality I set the stage for each day of operation. I schedule the day board and manage a team of up to 29 individuals as they create their magic upon the course, plan the nutrient and plant protectant applications and decide the irrigation cycles.

There is no one else to direct me to have additional projects ready as my team comes off the course. There isn't anyone who decides the best course of action after a violent weather event or in the preparation for a big golf event. On the flip side there isn't anyone there to take the fall for me if my management style misses a beat during a crisis situation.

I guess that is why I get paid "the big bucks."

**Another reason I love my job is the**

**enjoyment I get out of my staff.** Of course there are minor frustrations such as when a triplex mower completes his chore with one of the reels shut off or the water service personnel forget to restock the cone cups. And I can't forget the annoyance of a lad dumping a utility truck in the pond, bending the shaft of a straight shaft line trimmer or watering three of four flower urns on a hot summer afternoon. Then there is that pesky hydraulic leak that does eventually go away, when the tank has been run dry! Enough already! I do love my staff.

**The young team members, the rookies, bring back memories of my youth on a daily basis.** My Hispanic associates make me smile because (1) they work

hard, (2) they work as a strong team, (3) they appreciate having a job. And I get joy from my experienced (senior) staff because they are dedicated individuals enjoying retirement, yet keeping productive, something I am sure to aspire to be when I collect my gold watch.

I like the mysteries in my line of work. Beyond identifying a serious disease, which club house employee is responsible for the knees and toes and knees and toes and palm pattern on the seventh green and why there is play on a day we are closed for aerification, I like to have my mind challenged for I have an inquiring mind.

Once I deduced correctly that we had a mystical ritual performed on the fifth green by the circular pattern of the candle

wax left behind. Early on another morning, I tracked a youth to his nearby house after he drove across the sixth fairway for the final time. The latent heat felt rising from the hood of his car at 5 a.m. gave him away, and one rise and shine knock on the door alerted his whole family that somebody wasn't happy with his choice of shortcuts. Problem eliminated!

And finally I like the appearance of a smart looking and well-playing golf course. Not because I am an aficionado of the game, for I find it tough to dedicate another five hours away from my family, but because a well-tuned piece of property soothes my soul. As a craftsman of the turf management trade, a beautiful setting, green grass, manicured greens and defined bunkering make for complete presentation. I don't thrive in this business to create a course for me to play upon, but rather a course to accentuate my skills as a Golf Course Superintendent.

Work was a living hell for a very short period of time this summer. But I survived because I love what I do. My management possibilities, my staff, my mental challenges and the opportunity to ply my trade bring me back long day after long day.

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