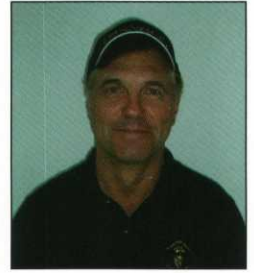


Insight *One Superintendent's Perspective*

By RANDY WITT, CGCS, Hong Kong Country Club



Course and statistics

Hong Kong Country Club has three courses: The Eden Course, a Par 70 measuring 6,060 yds with a slope of 124; the Par 71 Old Course, which stands at 6,231 yards and slopes at 118, and the New Course New Course, a Par 70, 6,531 yard layout with a 116 slope. They are all located in the New Territories of Hong Kong.

Years in the business and short vocational biography:

I have been in the turf business for 30 years. I was fortunate to start my career as Superintendent at Reedsburg CC in 1974. During my tenure there the golf course was expanded from nine holes to 18 holes with the majority of the construction performed in house. Continuing my career I have served as Superintendent at Janesville CC, Oneida Golf and Country Club, The Bull @ Pinehurst Farms, and currently The Hong Kong Golf Club.

Why and/or how did you enter the turf management industry?

As a young kid growing up, I played a lot of golf during summer vacation. This led to a job at the age of 14 on the golf course grounds crews at Maple Grove Golf Club in Lacrosse, WI. My first year's work experience consisted of hand-raking bunkers and becoming an expert rotary push mower tech. I entered the job market with hopes of becoming a millionaire, but unfortunately that has yet to occur.

Who was your professional mentor?

I worked at a couple of different courses early in my career, but was thrust into a Superintendent's position at a very young age so most of my experience was a product of my own professional trial and error. As I look back at my career, no one individual stands out as a mentor. In retrospect, the people who influenced me the most at a young age were Dr. Duich, Dr. Watschke and Dr. Waddington at Penn State University.

What has been the highest point in your career?

My first Superintendent's position which got me started on my career path at

a very young age. The beginning had to occur for all else to eventually happen. Every day is a good day; some are just better than others.

What has been your lowest point?

At the time, being non-renewed at Oneida G&CC. But as many times in life where lemons turn into lemonade, this event actually was to be a very fortunate happening for me.

Are your greatest challenges political, agronomic or managerial?

My current position and location, agronomical challenges are the greatest due to the tremendous effect that weather has on our courses. We go from winter conditions of 30s and 40s at night with day temperatures of 60s and 70s to summer temps of 90s during the days with nighttime lows in the 80s with rainfall exceeding 30 inches per month. These vast extremes keep you constantly on your toes and aware of what may be happening or could be happening both positively and negatively to the turf grass and ultimately the golf courses.

What is the most difficult disease to manage on your course and how do you?

Leaf spot is the most prevalent disease, but not too difficult to manage with good cultural programs and a good pesticide program. Weather is the biggest factor in causing the disease problem.

Is it hard to find good help in your area of the state?

Staff is relatively easy to acquire. Training is very critical, as staff members have no concept of the Game of Golf until they begin work here.

Do you have a dog on your crew?

Yes, Rambo. A black lab.

Where will our industry be in 10 years?

In 10 years I see our industry decreasing in size. I personally believe that United States golf, as a whole, will decrease in the number of existing courses when compared to the number of courses today. The ever-increasing cost for the golfer will effectively cause the number of

golfers to decrease steadily.

On the other

hand, I see continued growth in certain foreign markets such as Asia. Currently, Asia is experiencing a large increase in the number of golfers and golf courses. A new middle class is developing within the population with the economic ability to play the game of golf. With budgets continuing to be stressed, I see a decrease in the ability to stress the turf grass with lowering heights of cuts, wall to wall manicuring, etc. New turf grasses will continue to be developed with the ability to be more disease – and pest – resistant.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

Owning a small business in Northern Wisconsin.

What is your perspective of our state association and what would you change?

Due in large part to being a great distance away, both in Wisconsin and now Hong Kong, I have been unable to participate in association functions, boards, etc. Unfortunately, I have been unable to participate in the inner workings of the association. From a distance, I view the association as being very progressive and active for the membership. I have always believed that the state association primary function should be to serve its members. At times I've felt that the GCSAA as a whole has lost sight of serving the membership.

Name your foursome, who would you play with and why.

Arnold Palmer: For me, the one person who has moved the game of golf forward more than any other person. I believe it would be incredible to be able to listen to Mr. Palmer's observations on a multitude of golf-related topics and life itself.

Lee Trevino: To keep the golf round light, lively and humorous. To listen to the perspective and views of two great golfers on today's game of golf and life in general.

Dr. Henry Kissinger: A career politician who has no doubt some wonderful insights, views, and experiences to relate about the world past, present and future. ...and myself.