Are We Superintendents Masochists?

by George Renault
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"Masochist" is a term often applied to superintendents, not without some validity. Sure, we talk business at meetings. That's to be expected. We also spend more time on the job than many other professionals, with the exception perhaps of obstetricians. That's also expected, given Mother Nature's usual cooperation — nil.

But have you ever listened to the conversation at our purely social gatherings? Oh yes, we talk about the family and hobbies, but sooner or later (typically, sooner) the talk comes back to business. We play golf for fun, but it's too close to business to really be an outlet for the pressure.

Those of us who are not masochistic by nature become masochistic by design. Having to contend with Mother Nature and an infinite variety of members' temperaments is not exactly conducive to personal security. And so, we live life in the fast lane, juggling our personal lives and the demands of the job, while the stress builds up. The longer we're at the same course, the more insecure we become. Let's face it, longevity is the exception rather than the rule in our business — and the stress continues to mount.

On the surface, from a stress factor point of view, those at public courses would seem to be better off than those at private courses. Taking direction from one person certainly involves less pressure than from a committee. Also, there has to be some consolation in knowing that the individual public course golfer has no direct influence on your job. But this is all guesswork, and the difference in stress between the public and the private course superintendent is probably minimal.

Possibly what we need is to rethink how we approach our jobs — not the individual tasks that comprise our overall responsibility, but how we react to those demands placed on us by work and family.

It is said that to give thought to anything other than what we are doing at the present moment is to cheat ourselves of that moment. Who among us has time to waste? Carry this over into our personal lives, and I'll bet we've lost more than we care to admit. It takes effort to make each moment count, to forget about our personal lives and put total energy into the job when on the job, and to forget about the job when playing with our kids or enjoying some moment of pleasure.

Experts claim that outside pursuits are crucial to neutralize stress. But finding one to suit each individual is no easy task. Experts agree that the most effective stress-induced alternatives — ulcers, heart attacks, strained or broken marriages, burnout — you'd think we'd jump at any straw that reduced stress and offered a chance at a balanced life. Most of us don’t. We race along in our old routines, working golf and playing golf.

Those of us who have taken the time and the effort deserve everyone's sincere admiration. Those of us who won't take the time or expend the effort can add another adjective to masochistic — martyr. But, unless you're Catholic and 200+ years old, that won't get you a plug (nickel or sod).

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Meeting Schedule 1986

August 12 — Picnic, Hobbit's Glen, Bill Neus, host
September 9 — Open
October 14 — Hidden Creek C.C., Dick Gieselman, host
November 11 — Diamond Ridge G.C., Howard Gaskill, host
December 9 — Open (Annual election meeting)

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Net leaders at Swan Creek were Stan Lawson with 74–14 for a 60, Tom Walsh with 83–21 for 62, and George Renault with 83–16 for 67. Nick Vance led the gross division with his 71, trailed by Tom Regan with 74 and Jef Yingling with 78. Third round of the 1986 event will be played July 8 at Eisenhower Golf Course.