

President's Message

Here we are at the start of another glorious golfing season. It's kind of like a baseball team in spring training. Everybody is in first place with a chance to win the World Series. Our version of the Hot Stove League is strategizing to eliminate summer patch this year. Or maybe we have big plans to eliminate poa, or improve our staff. Whatever we plan to do this year there's always Mother Nature to contend with. I've already put in my order for something in between '88 & '89.



This year we are offering what has to be the finest monthly educational meetings in the country. Make the commitment to yourself now to be a part of these great opportunities. See you at Enterprise GC.

May all your days be 80 and your nights 55.

Bill Neus, C.G.C.S., President

Golf Notes

Our host this month, Lester Tanner, advises us that golf will be on a first-come, first-served basis. As we all know, if the weather is nice, there could be a lot of players trying out their new Christmas presents. For the March meeting, we will play a net skins game with a \$5 entry fee. Carts will cost \$16 each. You should also note that showers are available but you must bring your own towel. The cocktail hour will start at 6:00 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:00 p.m. The cost of dinner is \$25. We need an accurate headcount for this catered dinner, so please make your reservations by March 9.

RESERVATIONS
301-381-0030

How Green is Green?

by Bill Neus

It's the American way, isn't it? Work hard, be loyal, put in long hours, sacrifice, produce a good product day after day. Any business would appreciate and take care of an employee who provided these attributes, right? If you work as a golf course superintendent, too many times the answer seems to be an emphatic **no**.

There's a disturbing trend in our area right now. The new kids on the block, (or on the club board) are exercising a sort of George Steinbrenner style of management: "Take my team to the World Series every year or else!" Unfortunately, this is happening at clubs that have a history of good management by the superintendent. You put in many good years, the faces on the board change, and suddenly they tell you that you're not performing. Worse yet, they question your ability to do the job at all. How can they say these things after I've had another fine year, you lament.

Which brings me back to my original question. How green is green? Well, I don't have that answer, but many of this new breed feel the answer lies down the street at that other golf course, because they played there in May in the Member-Guest. Never mind that, by July, that other course had more problems than you could shake a stick (or a sprayer) at. The problem is that your people have this misguided perception of 365-days-per-year pristine perfection down the street.

You can fight these unfair comparisons all you want, but you'll never get rid of them. For all of you who are just getting your feet wet as superintendents, don't be so naive as to think it will never happen to you. That's when you will get hit the hardest. The golfer you make mad today will be your greens chairman tomorrow. It never fails.

So how can you prevent this type of

situation from developing at your club? I will not be so presumptuous as to say that I have an absolute answer, because there is no perfect solution in an imperfect world. But as author of this piece, please allow me to indulge in an unqualified opinion.

First, this situation has nothing to do with the ability to grow grass. We all can do that with our eyes closed, and if you think that you're better than the next guy then you are a fool. So, don't believe that just by growing good turf your problems are solved.

Second, this is a people problem. Personalities, egos, power plays, opinions from members who are—or want to be—in charge, and who constantly change. It's kind of like a football game where you let the fans change the rules at halftime every Sunday. How do you work at cultivating relationships with your members, new and old? If you do as good a job as I have, then you are all in a heap of trouble. I have learned, especially this year, that these ongoing relationships are as important as the quality of the turf you grow. So, if you are not working on the PR aspect of your job as hard as you are on the technical part, then you may be asking for trouble down the road.

One of my goals for this year is to focus on a commitment to deal with the members (especially the ones who are disagreeable and ornery) in a positive and aggressive way. Will this solve all of my problems? Of course not. Can I eliminate all of the ego and personality conflicts that are so prevalent in our industry? You've got to be kidding. But will I be able to look in the mirror and tell myself that I've made a strong attempt to improve on this difficult issue? Absolutely.

Start working on it today and never stop. make the effort to win these guys over. If you do, you may be able to avoid the debate over how green is green.