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## How to Turn Complaints To Your Advantage

How do you handle complaints from golfers? Nobody finds it easy to take criticism, especially when the gripes come from someone whose only turfgrass experience is his dandelion-free lawn. Unfortunately, golf courses were built and superintendents hired for the benefit of golfers, a situation which often necessitates a kid-glove approach to complaints.

Even if complaints are supposed to go to your green chairman, chances are you'll still have to field a few questions and comments from golfers who catch you on the course. Generally, they will be friendly, but there are always a few who aren't.

The first rule is keep your temper. Some people actually enjoy harassing and employee and others have to find someone to blame for a bad round. However, if you stay cool, he will soon realize he is out of line.

Hear him out. Many people who have honest complaints only reveal portions of their grievances because they are afraid you don't have time to listen to them. When you've heard the whole thing, try to give a thorough explanation. Above all, don't cut him off abruptly, even if you are in a hurry. Try to set up a time when you can go into the problem in detail if you think it is necessary.

Don't try to laugh it off. If he is serious about his complaint, he probably won't be very receptive to joke about it. After all, he may have a point.

Don't try to cover up. Even if it's your fault, he'll be more impressed with your forthrightness than with a slick, superficial explanation which blames everything from the weather to last month's ladies tournament.

There are some positive steps you can take to head off complaints. You can keep members informed of construction, maintenance operations

and other problem areas on the course by posting signs in the pro shop. If your club has a monthly newsletter, you can use it to keep members informed of upcoming operations and explain why they are necessary. Some superintendents have found it helpful to compile regular reports of their operations so that everyone, including club employees, knows not only what and when but also why an operation is taking place.

You can also train your crew to successfully deal with problems on the course. Make sure they have enough information to handle the problem and that they realize they are representing you and the club when they handle a complaint or answer a question.

GCSAA Fore Front

**OUR OBJECT:** The Collection, Preservation and Dissemination  
of Scientific and Practical Knowledge, and to Promote the Efficient  
and Economical Maintenance of Golf Courses

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