

## USGA

## Is The Game Really Any Better?

Mike Huck

It has been twenty years since I entered the golf business; my how things have changed. I started on the crew at a daily fee course back in Wisconsin where we only irrigated the greens and tees. The irrigation system was a night water person dragging around portable sprinklers connected to hoses.

The unirrigated fairways were a mixture of fine fescue and Kentucky bluegrass mowed with a 9 gang at a height of about 1 inch. During any rainy periods the bluegrass would dominate and you played a lot of "flier" lies. When there was a dry spell the fescue offered some color but with very tight lies. Eventually during a dry season most of the course would begin to look something like toast. The Kentucky bluegrass tees were mowed at about 3/4" with an old 76" triplex unit that was resurrected from the junk pile, we made do with what we had. The greens were considered some of the fastest and best

around the area and were cut between 7/32 and 1/4 of an inch. We sprayed on occasion throughout the summer for dollar spot and late each fall for snow mold. The rough was cut at 2" with a 5 gang and there was so much acreage it could barely be cut in a week, even with a full time man dedicated to it. We did all the trim mowing with twenty inch rotary mowers because we couldn't afford an out front rotary. The first weedeater we bought had a two horsepower engine and required a shoulder strap for the operator to support the weight. Using it was like carrying a sack of fertilizer over your shoulder all day. The total annual budget was about equal to what the combined salaries of a superintendent and assistant would be today. Our staff size peaked at about five to seven by mid summer, how we ever accomplished all the work I will never know.

Playing conditions were far from great but no one complained much at the time. By

modern standards this place was an absolute goat ranch, although everyone seemed to enjoy playing the game just as much as they do now. Expectations were much lower, life moved a bit slower, and as I remember rounds of golf were played faster.

Our modern world of golf course maintenance has brought us lightweight mowers, computerized irrigation, and ever increasing maintenance budgets. These advancements allow us to provide nearly wall to wall perfection and in the process changed the golfer's attitude from appreciating good conditions to demanding them on a daily basis. In fact, I would dare to bet some players have forgotten how to play a few shots they used to have in their bag back then, such as hardpan and thin lies associated with dry conditions. These conditions are seldom found on modern courses, let alone tolerated.

So with all the improvements our industry

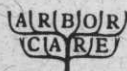
(Continued on page 7)

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the elements of the first written warning. When informing an employee of a suspension, ask them to determine in their absence, whether or not they wish to continue working, or feel they are capable of fulfilling the requirements of the job. In other words, force them to take responsibility for their actions. When they return, ask them to explain their decision.

**Discharge** - Discharge of an employee should occur when the conditions of the verbal and written warnings have not been met, and all the procedures outlined above have been satisfactorily completed. A private meeting should be scheduled with the employee and should include: a summary of the cause of dismissal, the final compensation check, the collection of all company property including keys, uniforms and notification of insurance benefits if applicable. At the conclusion of the meeting a summary of the discussion should be prepared for your files.

Although this process may seem rather lengthy and appears to provide more than ample time for an employee to correct their performance problems it accomplishes the

objectives stated earlier.

In summary, managing disciplinary problems requires time, forethought and a plan. Keep these thoughts in mind the next time you are faced with a situation which requires disciplinary action; as often as possible define expectations for performance in writing, be specific in stating the problem, include dates, be thorough in your documentation and finally take responsibility for your employees behavior. Generally, most employees want to perform well. Perhaps their failures are a result of poor training, expectations that were not clearly defined, or maybe they never should have been hired in the first place, and whose fault is that? ☀

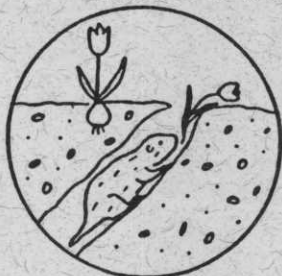
## Is The Game Better? (Cont'd.)

has made in the last twenty years my question is: Have we improved the game or just made the playing field more attractive to look at? Could we enjoy the game just as much if a little less time and money were spent on conditioning? Could more people afford to enjoy the game if it were not so expensive to play? Is it really any more fun to play golf now than it was then? Is the game really any better? As for myself, I'm not sure. ☀

## Naumann's NorCal News

Dave Smith has left Tilden Park G.C. in Berkeley to become the superintendent at Micke Grove GC in Lodi, replacing Bob Francine . . . Sam Singh is leaving Mountain Shadows Golf Resort in Rhonert Park to take over for Dave Smith at Tilden Park. All three facilities are managed by American Golf . . . Castle and Cook has taken Riverside GC in Coyote back under its own management team. Mike Swing, superintendent at Seven Oaks CC in Bakersfield is temporarily overseeing the operation until permanent positions are given . . . Mike Higuera left Riverside GC and is the superintendent at Seascope GC in Aptos. He was the superintendent at both courses prior to going full time at Seascope GC.

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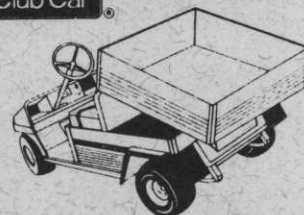
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