

THE GOLFING SUPERINTENDENT

by GEORGE J. CHARLESON

Superintendent, Park Country Club, Buffalo, New York

It has often been said, and rightly so, "It isn't necessary to be a big league ball player to be a major league manager." Does this same axiom hold true regarding a golf course superintendent? e.g.: "One doesn't have to be a golfer in order to be a golf course superintendent." It may be to a certain degree. However, I feel it could be a great asset to be a "golfing superintendent". Now, before everyone retorts with one chorus of—"There are hundreds of turfmen all over the country who grow fine turf and have never hit a golf ball in their lives"—allow me to present my case for a "golfing superintendent".

It must be remembered that golf is a game and is governed by a set of rules. These particular rules are promulgated by the United States Golf Association and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland. Each superintendent should be aware of them, but the golfing superintendent is bound to become more familiar with them and the reasons behind them.

Of the many rules which come to mind, one often overlooked by a non-golfer is the teeing ground. This is defined as a rectangular area two club lengths in depth, the front and sides of which are defined by two markers. In other words, when placing the tee markers, prior to the start of a day's play, it is necessary to remember that a player has the right to use the area two club lengths behind the markers. Thus, it is important to remember that when placing the markers near the rear of the tee, enough room must be left for these two club lengths.

Another rule not familiar to many non-playing superintendents is, "In placing a cup, the liner should be set at least one inch below the putting green surface". The reason is fairly obvious. It allows a well-hit putt to drop into the hole, rather than strike the liner and bounce away. As a golfer, the superintendent becomes very conscious of this rule and is ready to correct any infractions on his own course. Having played shots to various parts of the greens, he becomes more aware of the most desirable pin locations. This awareness helps provide for a fairer, more interesting and enjoyable test of golf for his club members. It

also can serve as a means of more evenly directing the flow of traffic over the green.

A golfing superintendent has one more distinct advantage and this is strictly defensive. On countless occasions he must listen to the various complaints of the golfing fraternity—"The greens are so fast,—so slow,—so hard,—so soft,—so long,—or so short." He may hear, "The ball sits on the green too low" or, "The fairways are cut too short and I can't hit a wood off such a tight lie". Undoubtedly these all sound too familiar to superintendents. (Remember, golfers are human beings and, as such, are quick to blame most anything, including the superintendent, for a poor game.) However, *through personal experience as a golfer*, the superintendent is able to evaluate the legitimacy of these complaints.

Perhaps the greens are slowing down, or a grain is beginning to creep in, or they are a bit too firm. As a golfer, he looks at the situation with the maintenance view of the superintendent and the "player" view of the golfer as well. Thus, a touchy situation can be remedied before the general membership starts to complain and he is able to stay one step ahead of another headache.

Golf is good business

It is a generally accepted fact that most large and successful companies place their executives and salesmen in country clubs throughout the States. One may ask why this is done. There

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 8)

are many answers to this question. However, it is felt that the golf course is regarded as an ideal place to entertain prospective clients, thus helping to promote good public relations. It is also felt that business may soar while relaxing in the pleasant surroundings of a golf course.

If big business thinks so highly of golf for promoting business and relations, shouldn't the golf course superintendent? He has the greatest access to the "place of business". The golfing superintendent can make the golf course his meeting place for his green chairman and/or committee. He is able, during the course of a relaxing round of golf, to point out first-hand his needs in the maintenance of their golf course. It is amazing how much more understanding a committee can be when viewing problems "at the scene", as opposed to discussing them in the board room of the clubhouse. In addition, golf provides an opportunity for the superintendent to meet the committee on an equal basis, rather than the usual employer-employee basis.

"He just cuts grass . . ."

The golfing superintendent will become better known to the membership and a little more respected because of a common interest in the game. This may help to eliminate the feeling among many that anyone connected with golf course maintenance "just cuts grass". Another point to consider is the changing of the Green Committee Chairman. Every superintendent who has experienced this change realizes that each one may well be a frustrated golf course architect. Many have their own pet projects, such as redesigning a certain hole or trap or—perhaps—the entire golf course! A superintendent can explain the varied problems of maintenance connected with his proposals. However, as a golfer, he can view them from both angles and speak and act more intelligently regarding them. As a golfing superintendent, he shall approach any question with an open mind. This enables him to work

at his vocation and be looked upon by his chairman as a professional turf specialist.

This is not meant to imply good golf course superintendents now and in years gone by have not, or will not, play the game. However, it may be well to remember . . . "Maybe you are standing too close to the forest to see the trees". Golf can help develop a more versatile and well-rounded superintendent and it may promote more respect for his profession. This, in the long run, may help him to attain a higher professional and economic level.

Let me attest to the fact that golf most assuredly has aided me in my profession and also let me point out one more fact. You may possibly be the recipient of the Championship Trophy at a future GC AA Tournament—all because you made the game part of your job!

*With acknowledgements to
the "Golf Superintendent"*

FOR FAST GREENS



FIT A GRASS COMB
TO YOUR MOWER

STEWART & CO.,
FINE TURF SPECIALISTS
EDINBURGH. EH2 2AY