

Mr Superintendent :

HOW'S YOUR PR IQ?

By **NICK GEANNOPOULOS**, Managing Editor

The meaning and workings of "public relations" is often misunderstood. How can this intangible subject be better clarified? More to the point, how can public relations be applied to the benefit of the golf course superintendent?

Even though public relations is a standard topic on conference programmes and an important factor in contemporary decision-making, the term is frequently misunderstood.

Part of the confusion is the result of combining two common words. When used together, the term states an idea that is not conveyed by the individual definition of either "public" or "relations".

Definition

Public relations activities are more than relations with the public. Another common misconception is that public relations is publicity, which is but *one* of many methods used by the profession. Nor should this work be confused with that of the press agent, who often uses questionable methods to gain public notice.

Webster's Dictionary provides a long and involved definition of public relations. Stated simply, public relations is defined as the art of winning public favour by doing the right thing and receiving credit for it.

For our purposes, the golf professional has attained his present distinction in golfing circles largely through the efforts of public relations. In addition to the routine publicity he receives through his own golfing skill, the pro uses his business and marketing skill through a friendly, personable attitude, expert teaching ability and the countless extra services that he provides for members while dispensing good public relations at the club.

The club manager also is well-known for his congenial attitude, his unique flair for arranging parties, his ability to communicate with the members, and the overall superb quality, preparation and manner of serving meals at the club.

How then can the golf course superintendent improve his relations with the golfing public?

What you can do

The golf course superintendent, as an individual, must make it his own responsibility to "interpret himself to society". He must be constantly alert to opportunities to appear in the golfing public's eye and mind.

It is the purpose of public relations to expand every avenue of communications with the people he contacts. As his capacity for contact with his various daily public increases, so does his capacity to do a better job.

Such a professional attitude reaps very specific rewards in terms of salaries and related benefits. As a superintendent, you make it a point to know the people with whom you work. Build a reputation for being co-operative and congenial with your club manager, pro and controller. Seek them out for an occasional lunch and an opportunity to discuss club matters, just golf in general or even current events.

Take a leadership stand by suggesting that they refer all golf course maintenance inquiries to you, the expert, rather than to try to answer questions themselves. Arrange for constructive round-table discussions with your crew and schedule a daily critique with your assistant to discuss the calendar for the coming weeks. Cover any changes or additions to the long-range plans assigned to your department, so that in the event of your absence, the maintenance programme need not be disrupted.

You will find unlimited opportunity in visits at the Pro Shop and Starter Area after lunch to meet and chat with members about golf and turf-grass management, and even home lawn care. Most members are, either directly or indirectly, involved in the proper care and maintenance of their own lawns, and they greatly appreciate professional

(contd. on p. 8)

(contd. from p. 6)

and authoritative information that will help them grow a better one.

If your club publishes a newsletter, you might take advantage of this media to further your public relations by submitting something newsy, like "what's doing on the golf course" or an informative column on "home lawn care".

Be available

Your members should also be advised that you are available as a consultant. First and foremost, though, you must realise that both your personal appearance and the condition of your golf course will dictate your "know-how" in a louder voice than any amount of authoritative information you may impart to your readers. In other words, your own neat appearance and well-manicured course will give your advice all the authority it needs.

An excellent opportunity for showing pride in your professional organisation is to invite your green chairman to the chapter meetings, and include lunch and a game of golf. You might also arrange with a neighbouring superintendent for a golf game with each other's green chairman.

Another good public relations move that will keep you one jump ahead of others is to study and learn the "Rules of Golf". This effort can open many doors for you because anyone who plays golf will agree that to know all the rules of the game is quite a feat. Once word got around, you would be sought out to render golf decisions as the club's knowledgeable golf superintendent.

Learn the game

Of course, every golf superintendent should be a golfer. Is there a better way to look over the course? To establish a common bond with the members? To appear before all as the authority you propose to be? Your club's pro will gladly teach you the game if you do not now play or help you to improve your game if you do.

Using technical terminology and phrases during your discussion meetings on course maintenance will also improve your professional image. Use of such terms as: soil porosity, transpiration,

microclimate, soil profile, resiliency, and the use of acre and 1,000 square feet as the units of measure in your work, will label you as the "man in the know".

The professional golf course superintendent refers to "soil" instead of "dirt", the "maintenance building" instead of "barn", and presents himself as "golf course superintendent" rather than "greenkeeper" or "green superintendent".

Locally, get acquainted with the nearby university's extension programme on their latest research concerning fertilisers, chemicals, grasses or soil mixes. Get acquainted with your community newspaper's sports writer and feed him information about all activities at the club.

Your green chairman can help you develop good public relations with the members by inviting you to the festivities that follow big tournaments.

If wall space permits, you might install a "Public Relations Centre" consisting simply of a bulletin board located at either the Pro Shop or Starter Area. Here you can display any awards, diplomas or certificates you have received. You may also want to include notices about work that is going on or being planned for the golf course.

Have a camera on hand, too, to take your own pictures of members and their guests during the club's biggest tournament to put on your bulletin board. You might even take slides to be shown at the next green committee or board meeting.

Your bulletin board might also be used to display the views of "experts" on controversial subjects. The opinion of a well-known outside agent is often the clincher in selling a club plan to members.

Use displays

Anticipate questions from the members by providing information for them as to why you renovate the greens. Be prepared to answer why it was extra wet at certain locations on the course on any given day. Be able to explain why and what you are building. Also, if space is available, display a scale model of the golf course that not only has eye

(contd. on p. 9)

THE SPORTS TURF RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Institute has recently held two Spring courses of instruction, each of five days' duration and attended by 26 and 25 people respectively. Those attending the second of these courses appear in the picture.

There will be further courses in the Autumn, commencing on 11th, 18th and 25th October; these again will be of five days' duration and will be attended by greenkeepers and groundsmen employed by the Institute's subscribing clubs and organisations.



Course of Instruction — 19th - 23rd April 1971

From left to right, Back Row:—S. J. Green, Littlestone Golf Club; G. F. Clarke, Department of the Environment; J. M. Cowen, Denham G.C.; R. Ives, Northwood G.C.; F. K. Birks, Dept. of the Environment; D. Barber, Northenden G.C.; R. Fitzpatrick, Dept. of the Environment; M. G. McCance, Dept. of the Environment; N. Carter, Dept. of the Environment; C. Wright, Leatherhead G.C. *Middle Row:*—W. T. Taylor, Dept. of the Environment; F. Mickleburgh, Dept. of the Environment; T. Maidment, Royal Belfast G.C.; A. Cunningham, Manchester Parks Dept.; R. Glazier, Ifield Golf & Country Club; L. Gwilliam, Moor Park G.C.; J. J. Smith, Morpeth G.C.; D. Heath, Gatton Manor G.C. *Front Row:*—K. Sleet, Hitchin Urban District Council; D. Weatherington, Dept. of the Environment; S. Williams, Dept. of the Environment; W. Hebdige, Dept. of the Environment; F. G. de Aguilar, Son Vida Club de Golf; E. G. Yeates, Dept. of the Environment; A. Anslow, Skipton G.C.

(contd. from p. 8)

appeal but shows pertinent information such as length of holes, pars and handicaps.

The methods of promoting good public relations are limitless. They can make up a complex network of ingenious promotional endeavours or they can be found simply in the personable, attractive appearance of a conscientious

worker who radiates an honest love for the work he does.

Let the superintendent strive for professionalism. Let him step up among the distinguished leaders in the golfing industry. Let him be recognised as a man who is every bit as important as the job that he does.

With acknowledgements to the "Golf Superintendent."