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The President's Message

A trend in our golf course profession is perturbing me. This month I would like to expound on it. I may be mistaken but I think I see our golf course superintendent's profession turning from its true direction. I think we are not doing the right thing and we might be prostituting our old and honored profession. I am speaking of the recent trend of green superintendents slowly encroaching on the field of managership and away from our true profession that of greenkeeping. This situation, I believe with a good degree of success has stemmed from the managers becoming general managers and heading up the whole clubhouse-and-grounds shinbag. As a result of their yet unproven venture we have become panicky and think that by acquiring new titles and certificates, by attending bookkeeping and finance seminars and urgently seeking further club house property responsibilities, the situation will change. I don't think so. A Golf Superintendent is a Golf Superintendent and a Manager is a Manager and the only way this fact will change is if you wish to change your profession completely. And if that's what you want, go ahead, but do it full turn please. Do not play games—you're only fooling yourself. In my case there is no conflict. I know what I want to be—a good greenkeeper and nothing else. I'll be happy with that title. Because, you see, I know something else—call it a basic managerial premise if you wish. And that is, unless the golf course superintendent is in complete charge of all and total bookkeeping and unless all money transpires through his office he can never be top dog or in full control at the club, leastways not in the eyes of the board members. This fact is as sure and true as the fact that the golf professional will always be the glamour man at the country club no matter how many double knits you own or how well you groom the grass. So, clouding up our true identity by seeking out extra jobs and taking more responsibility for a little more money has nothing to do with our real profession and skill of growing and manicuring grass. This is futile hypocrisy. General managership is not our business. The managers who have taken over completely and are now total general managers have sold down the river their true responsibility to the club. They have taken on too many responsibilities and have gone into fields that they know nothing about. Let's not play their ambitious game. Top clubs as in past history

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are going to find out it's not going to work and there really is no money saved. So let me be absolutely blunt. Become a manager or stay a golf course superintendent, but whatever, be true to yourself—you can't be superb at both jobs. Declare your hand. Don't get into a mixed-up ball game—unless you want to change jobs every few years like some of the general managers are doing. The wise ones (and we have a few outstanding ones in the Chicago area) work with us, co-operate with us, communicate and co-ordinate with us, but are smart enough to keep their hands and noses out of our responsibilities and something they don't know anything about. And that's the way it should be.

I would like to say something else also. I am not, nor is anybody else, impressed by greenkeepers calling themselves managers, golf engineers, turf managers and other nonsensical names. Golf or green superintendents — yes, greenkeepers — lovely, "grass growers or grass farmers" is fine with me. I know what I am and I make good money at it. I don't need to seek extra "janitorial" jobs around the clubhouse to tarnish my true professional image. My direct responsibility is the golf course and that load is heavy enough for me. And please don't give me that old crap about shrinking my duty as a breadwinner, or not being able to take on extra responsibility, or not trying to uplift our profession. I take on more responsibility and I am more involved with exciting things than I know what to do with—for my family and for the image of my profession. And I know many of you are the same. Long ago I could have become manager, but that's not my forte. I am a GREENKEEPER and in this field of endeavor I strive for perfection.

There is something else I must tell you that is in me (and unless you have a touch of the same, you might as well become a manager or go into something else). I would miss the soft warm rains that fall on the turf that I grow. I would miss the white snow that covers the golf course in late fall for the first time, melts, and then softly comes again. I would truly miss all the challenges of mother nature that go with my profession. The hot sun of summer heat and the salty sweat of humidity on my brow. I would miss the pleasure of admiring turf manicured and maintained under both good and adverse conditions and I know that I had a hand in keeping the verdant picture that way. But of course there would be other things also, soothing the frustrations of working with mother nature. I would miss her many gifts to us greenkeepers, the trees changing in the seasons and the flowering shrubs in spring. I would miss the daisies and other wild flowers hiding from our mowers next to the majestic elms, and I would miss the pheasants calling to their mates in early morning. I know I would miss the honest faces of commercial friends calling on me and old greenkeepers advising me. But most of all I would miss getting up each early morning and playing the endless chess game of man against nature, or perhaps more truthfully, trying to work with her and relishing the achievement and oh, the satisfaction and the pleasure that comes once in a while each season when just for a short time I have won the battle.

Paul N. Voykin, President

Midwest Association dinner dance will be held at River Forest Golf Club on Saturday Night, October 14.



Editor

Editorial

Many people write articles or make statements that everyone cannot accept. I have read articles and listened to discussions advocating the use of topdressing on golf greens. After having spent fifty-six years of my life on a golf course, I feel that I am in a position to make a few statements on the subject.

I agree that a newly constructed green requires topdressing until the time that the putting surface is smooth and the turfgrass has established itself. What would happen if no more topdressing is applied? A reasonable answer is that it depends on how well the construction of the green was executed. Let us assume that the green has excellent drainage, is finished with ten to twelve inches of the best top soil that humanly can be made, is planted with a good strain of grass and receives proper management. What are some of the disadvantages or problems that could be created by the use of topdressing?

On the morning following the day the topdressing was applied the green will usually be wet, either from dew, rainfall or sprinkler. The early golfers will be walking on the wet topdressing resulting in the creation of a hard thin layer, especially near the cup. How many days will it take before this is no longer noticeable?

When will the green be mowed? One must wait until the surface of the green is dry—late enough to interfere with the golfer who sometimes becomes sort of abusive. What about the damage done to the mower that is used to cut the topdressed green? Is topdressing a maintenance procedure that has been carried on from years ago, before the equipment that we have today was available? Has not our increased knowledge permitted the unnecessary use of topdressing?

I know of a good private club on the west side of Chicago that has good putting greens. Seven of them have not been topdressed in thirty-seven years. The other eleven were rebuilt between twenty-five and thirty years ago and were topdressed occasionally for about two years—after that, nothing. Another course nearby has not topdressed greens during the past seventeen years and they are good putting greens.

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