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As March drew to a close, I'm sure we were all wondering when the weather was going to become more spring-like. If you are like me and never entirely ready anyway, this last window of opportunity should have provided everyone with a chance to prepare yourself for the upcoming season. There were many lessons to be learned in 1995; and hopefully, everyone took the time over the winter to look for some of the answers that may have eluded us last summer.

The Education Committee has met twice since the annual meeting and has a solid plan for the upcoming season. This year the committee members are Tim Anderson, Len Conley, Don Ferreri, Gary Hearn, Randy Kane, John Macleod, Joel Purpur and myself. I am fortunate to have two past committee chairmen and sev-

eral repeat volunteers to work with. Everyone has provided helpful input and takes his duties seriously.

Thus far, our monthly meetings have been very successful and informative. An OSHA representative provided insight into inspections, safety issues and his organization's purpose at the January meeting. In March, Randy Kane updated us on all of the new bentgrass varieties. Bruce Branham and Hank Wilkinson teamed up to provide us with their latest research results and update us on the program at the University of Illinois. There was also a small engine seminar at Seven Bridges in March.

Additionally, the April issue of *On Course* contained the first installment of our new column, "Ask the Expert." This monthly feature will pass along the experiences of local professionals (not necessarily only superintendents) in the golf business. Members of the

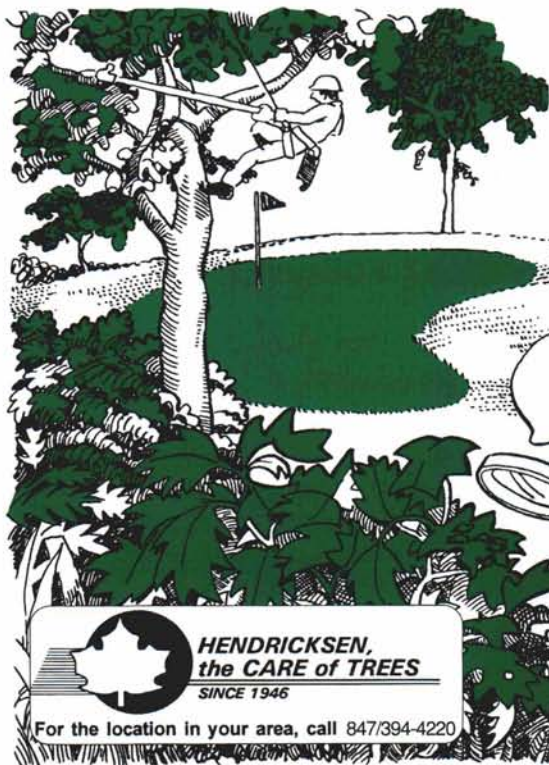
Education Committee are responsible for these articles. We also have plans for improved Spanish classes, computer courses and a resume writing seminar. Unfortunately, the Microscope Disease ID class scheduled for April was cancelled. Ms. Pat Sanders had not received enough commitments from other chapters in this part of the country. We will keep you updated on future developments.

If there are any ideas or topics you would like to see covered, please let someone on the committee know. We can't please everyone, but a few suggestions and comments that we have addressed to date include:

Use more superintendents in educational programs.

We have gotten back to more superintendents speaking at the annual Midwest Clinic. (Rookie Superintendent's Forum in 1995.) This year we plan to have

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superintendents who have dipped into the biological trends speak at the annual meeting.

Move the speaker up in front of golf.

Rest assured, we will try that this year. Please show up early and support the effort when we do.

More education. Never be complacent with education. More events like Medinah during off-season.

The March meeting has been expanded to at least two hours of education in the past few years. The Spanish class has now been offered three times in the past year. Despite small numbers, there was a CPR training class offered twice in the past couple of years.

No education at the summer meetings.

At this point, we really don't feel this is an option. With no formal education, many members can not justify the expense to their club.

In closing, the Education Committee is listening to the membership and improving when possible. However, I would encourage you to be realistic with what you expect. Certainly, someone who has been in the business several years is not going to pick up 20 new ideas in an hour of education. I've never attended a GCSAA seminar and walked out with 8 hours of fresh information. I was told it's the "little things" that can separate your course from the one down the street. Sometimes, one or two new ideas that can be shaped into your operation make a whole day of education worth the effort. It all starts with showing up and participating. So please, when the education that you have asked for is provided, do your part by making yourself available. ■

can we preach: **SPEED KILLS!** **If golfers learned anything from last season, it's that necessary adjustments made to our maintenance program may affect play and, more importantly, keep the grass growing.**

Communication and education are probably the most useful tools in a superintendent's arsenal. At Hinsdale G.C., Bob Maibush used every opportunity to inform his members of the brutal effect of the summer heat not only at his club but throughout the region. Along with Dr. Randy Kane of the CDGA, Bob put out several press releases describing the weather's effect on our courses.

Dan Dinelli at North Shore C.C. turned last year's struggles positive. The wet spring demonstrated a need for drainage improvements, and the summer heat brought forth the need for precise irrigation and sound agronomics. Jacobson Golf Design was retained to formulate a 5-year plan designed, as Dan puts it, "to focus on the infrastructure. . . . This plan has very little to do with design of the layout as it deals with drainage, irrigation, green construction, and the use of newer bents." Dan normally takes a proactive approach in most of his management practices as witnessed in his extensive computerized weather tracking, micro-organism research, and a 10,000+ sq. ft. bentgrass evaluation nursery.

The membership at Chicago G.C. wants a dry, firm playing surface—and they got it in 1995. Superintendent Bill Whitley didn't put much water on the fairways and even less on the greens (in his estimation, 60 percent less). While there were localized dry spots on the greens, Bill assured the membership that although it didn't look as lush, it

putted fine. The die-hard traditionalist membership resisted overseeding the fairways until Bill was able to devise a seed mix that was more drought tolerant than creeping bentgrass so that they can continue to enjoy a dry, firm surface. The custom mix of colonial bent, chewings, and hard fescue will also require less plant protectants and fertilizers.

If the golfing world wasn't already aware, last season illustrated that the most important person at their golf course is the superintendent. Our programs have the most influence on the club's bottom line. Those courses that suffered damage last season also reported revenue losses. The food may have been tasty or the swimming pool refreshing, but if the course isn't "up to par," golfers simply won't show up.

The challenge is there for us to show the golfing community that we can rebound. Those courses suffering the most damage have already worked feverishly last fall to restore playing conditions. Golf course superintendents have a history of attacking problems head on. So, go ahead, golfers, have a good memory, because with Mother Nature willing, we are up for the challenge! ■

