

Golfers Who Get It— Priceless

This is absolutely my favorite time of the year. The fast-approaching holiday season is heralded by the merry sounds of irrigation systems being winterized, the happy gurgle of lakes being drained and the joyous tap-tap-tap of elves changing bedknives. It's still too early to worry too much about next year, maybe some budget work, maybe a little catch-up on some smoldering projects, but by and large the big stuff is done. The course is aerified, the leaves are cleaned up, the seasonal staff is gone for the winter, a few diehard golfers still brave the elements, but it's not uncommon to get out on the course and not see a living soul.

Given time to think is a wonderful gift. Urgency breeds instinctive responses that may or may not be the most appropriate under the circumstances. I often find myself redoing work that was done in a hurry, angry with myself that I let it happen again. Before you get too caught up in what's coming up, use this time to look back on last year. Evaluate the hits, honestly critique the misses and get a head start on the holiday season by expressing some gratitude to the elves that help you make the magic.

One of our often-overlooked cadres of support is “golfers who get it.”

Just who are “golfers who get it?”

Perhaps this can be best explained by examining who they aren't: the larger segment of the species—Players Understanding Diddley (PUDs):

- A regular golfer at my place, an educated professional, walked up to me and commented on the condition of the fairways, saying, “The fairways are excellent, I see you finally raised the height of cut like I suggested last year.”

“Well Doc,” I replied, “first of all you're right, the fairways are in good condition, but it's due, in large part, to the weather and several changes we've made to our cultural program . . .”

“No it's not, you raised the height of cut!”

“Excuse me, Doc, what about the fairways do you like better than before?”

“My ball sits up real nice. I'm able to strike more of the ball and spin it.”
(This guy is a player, maybe a 7 or 8 handicap.)

“Good, that's what I was hoping would happen when I dropped the height one-eighth of an inch so the grass blades stay upright. I was worried that by doing so I might cause more stress with the amount of play we . . .”

“You lowered the height of cut?”

“Yes, among other things, as I was saying . . .”

“No you didn't!”

“Excuse me?”

“No you didn't, you raised the cut—do you think I'm an idiot?”

(No, now I know you are.)

As I said, a PUD.

- We're closed on Mondays until 9:00 a.m. and play starts on the first tee only, so we can get some work done on the course. I fought tooth and nail for this time and guard it jealously. You public supers know how important that kind of window is. One Monday we're running around spraying, watering, topdressing, I don't remember exactly what, but I look up and there's a group on the third tee and it's 9:03 a.m.; making matters worse, they're a fivesome of employees, starters and rangers, each with his own riding cart!

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I flip out and ride up to them, guns blazing!

“What the heck are you guys doing out here. The course is closed until 9:00 and you know it!”

“Jeeze, Fred, what are you so upset about. We waited until 9:00 and decided to start on number three because the first tee was so backed up. Is that a problem?”

Again, PUDs.

• My course has a Golf Advisory Committee (acronym; GAcK); it’s our equivalent of a Greens Committee. Anyway, one of the members called me out on our watering practices.

“Why are the greens so dry when I play? My shots don’t hold.” (Handicap 26, this guy couldn’t spin the ball if he used a Cuisinart.) “I know you have an irrigation system, don’t you use it?”

(Oh boy.) “Yes we irrigate the greens, but only as needed to provide about one inch of water per week. So, you see, it depends on precipitation, evaporation, wind and temperature. Factor all of these variables together and we program the system to . . .”

“So you don’t water every night!”

“No, as I was saying . . .”

“Well, you should!”

Classic PUD.

I love PUD stories; they are fun to share with other supers. PUDs are usually pretty harmless, because they are kept in check by their fellow “golfers who get it.” PUDs can be dangerous if they find their way into a position of authority at your course. Be patient and communicate and keep a good supply of “golfers who get it,” hopefully ones that carry low handicaps; they’re revered by PUDs, who think a good player knows everything about the game.

PUDs are inevitable; they are the counterpoint that make you really appreciate “golfers who get it.”

• You’ve spent 13 hours aerifying greens to finish the job in one day, the guys are whipped, the machinery is smoking. While you’re wiping the sweat out of your eyes a golfer strides up and, lo and behold, compliments you on the greens and thanks you for your staff’s efforts.


• It’s ladies’ league day and one of the fairway mowers dinged a bed-knife so they’re behind. One of the

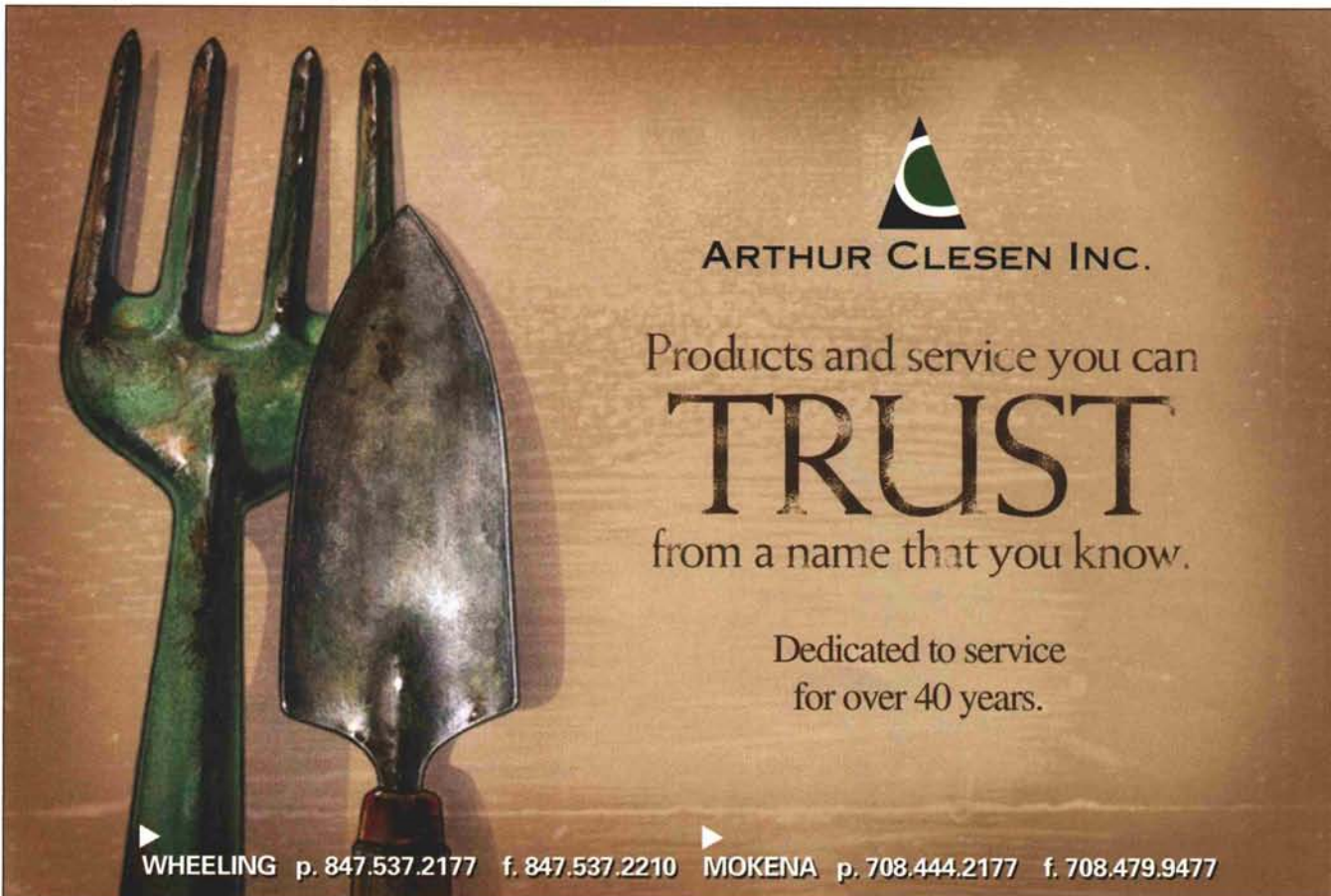
players marches up to you and proceeds to rave on about how you always schedule maintenance during their times and interfere with their enjoyment of the game. Her playing partner steps in to say, “Well Gladys, that’s not true, I’ve noticed they usually have two mowers out here to keep ahead of us. I only see one today, there must be some sort of problem with the other one. Is that right Fred?”


• A player agrees to go off with some beginners, keeps them on pace and shows them how to repair ball marks, replace divots and rake the bunkers.

• A regular comes up to you and quietly informs you that the divot mix box is empty on seven tee.

• A player accidentally runs over a cart sign and actually stops, gets out of the cart and replaces it.

“Golfers who get it” are the unsung heroes that keep us from going postal on the “great unwashed.” We all have PUD stories; let’s remember the “golfers who get it” when we give thanks on November 25th. 




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