

A Place For Everyone

The goals and aspirations of the men and women in the golf course management profession are as diverse and varied as those in any profession. There is no single title that guarantees success, nor is there any given job that defines success. From the smallest nine-hole rural courses to the most recognized and revered metropolitan golf courses, superintendents contribute significantly to the playing experiences of all those who play the game.

Instead of relishing the positions and jobs we hold, too often we get caught up in the debates involving limited budget versus big budget, two-year versus four-year turfgrass degrees, college-educated versus non-college-educated superintendents. Professional competition is grand but not at the point of getting excited, miffed or engrossed in the titles we have, don't have or that someone else has. In truth, all that matters or should matter is how we as individuals feel about ourselves and the jobs we do. Basing our definition of success on what others (even strangers) think can be a huge mistake.

I have had the good fortune of managing some very fine golf clubs, far beyond the conditions of the nine-hole course in south Texas where I began playing as a 5-year-old. While I have enjoyed playing some of the finest conditioned and most recognized golf courses on this continent, I have never enjoyed golf more than on that tattered golf course in Gonzales, Texas.

My point is that golfers can and do have fun at every type of facility, and each of our jobs is meaningful and important. Our job is to provide our employers with the golfing conditions they expect. Every superintendent has the opportunity to meet that expectation and enjoy significant satisfaction. Golfers don't just have fun at top-100 courses; they have fun at courses all over this continent.

As golf course superintendents, each of us has the ability to impact thousands of golfers in a variety of venues. Our profession has progressed in recognition and status. Today there is specialization that has never existed. There are professionals who excel in a wide variety of areas, whether that is golf course construction and renovation, environmental compliance, detailed manicuring of established courses or a host of other skills.

Due to strong business and management skills, superintendents are also being promoted to general manager, chief operating officer and director of golf positions. There are those professionals who manage top-100

courses, and there are those equally successful and happy superintendents who manage small courses in remote towns all over this country. Each of us can only measure success by what is important to us rather than trying to compare ourselves to everyone else.

Don't get me wrong, I do not see anything wrong with wanting to compete against the very best. But what is really the best? I have friends who make half the salary I make and others who make twice the compensation I do. I respect the agronomic skills of both. I am encouraged and applaud those in our profession who set the course-conditioning and compensation standards. Their recognition, visibility, exposure and success benefit every one of us.

There are thousands of golf courses all over this country and each of them needs a qualified golf course superintendent. If we look deep inside ourselves and define what is really important to us, we can pursue a job at a place that will fit our dreams, our goals, our families and our careers. Our personal and professional

worth and value are not measured by budget dollars and salary amounts, but rather by the heart and passion that we give to the game of golf.

To me, every superintendent is important. We may not all be certified or all Class A. We are not all equal in skill, experience and talent. Salaries and recognition are not the same for everyone in our profession, just like they are not in any other profession. But our profession is grand because no matter where we work, each of us can and does play a significant role in the enjoyment of the game for all golfers. So no matter where we work, we each have a set of unique challenges and circumstances that make us valuable. Each of us who manages a golf course is a "Keeper of the Green." Where would golf be without you?



Our personal and professional worth and value are not measured by budget dollars and salary amounts, but rather by the heart and passion that we give to the game of golf.