

# What are you Thankful For? The Season's End?

*Greetings and hurray for frost on the pumpkin! I am thankful the leaves are down and gone. The skunks, mosquitoes, bees, and those other pests have vanished. The course will soon be closed. Let the teardowns begin! Before this happens there is much to reflect on.*

First I am thankful to the staff for making it a great season with minimal accidents or destruction. There's a great feeling of accomplishment at this time of the year if every piece of equipment can be driven into the shop at the end of the day under its own power. It's also notable that there were no physical injuries this year. Following basic safety guidelines really is worth the effort. I hope our crew enjoys the holidays with their families and that they all return next season.

I also want to give thanks to some key people in the service realm. Pete, J.D., Rex, and Jesus at Nadler Inc. should be recognized for showing how important consistent customer service is. Nadler's scheduling of courtesy calls this past summer really was worthwhile. I was able to chat casually with J.D. and Rex when they were out at my shop. I got some service tips that aren't found in the technical manuals. Those tips and more were shared by all who attended the TETA seminar hosted by Nadler back in October. The electrical systems on the Club Car vehicles are much more involved than just maintaining battery water and cables. Again, thank you Dave and Eric Nadler and your customer service staff.

Another huge thank you goes out to JW Turf and Company. Joe Hutsler has been a tremendous help to all of us. I've been able to call Joe cell-to-cell while I'm out on the course. Rarely did he not pick up the phone and make time to help me out on the spot. Often the problems we experience are not in the technical manual. Joe's day-to-day knowledge and experience enables him to be much quicker with the answers. Very often time is critical for us when a machine is down. Joe never hesitates to help out. Thank you Joe! A big thank you to Kelli, Mike, and everyone for your flawless efforts in filling all our parts needs. To be able to call JW Turf at 6:30 a.m., Monday through Friday (in season), and actually talk to someone is phe-

nomenal. To be able to place an order for will-call for the same morning is such a great convenience when a machine is down. Thanks for allowing me to have another successful season. You make me look good!

Next I want to share with you a memorable experience for which I am most grateful. In June of this year, I was told by Mike Matchen (Superintendent/Greens keeper/Golf Operations Manager/ and all-a-round good egg – Wilmette Golf Club) that he had nominated me for the Gold Wrench Award for Technician of the Year. This award is presented annually by *Golf Week Magazine*. Mike also told me that Terry Porter (Director of the Wilmette Park District) and Thomas Grizmore (Director of Leisure Services – Wilmette Park District) supported the nomination. I was, of course, shocked and honored by Mike's announcement. He told me about it only because I might be contacted by the magazine for an interview. After telling my wife and kids, I pretty much forgot about it. Then one morning in July, I was in the club house basement attending to carts. Mike cruised down the service ramp and came to a screeching halt. With a big smile on his face, he extended his right hand and said, "Congratulations, you are one of the finalists!" It took me a moment before I even realized what he meant. He said he had just gotten off the phone with Bradley S. Klein (National Director, *Golf Week's* Course Raters). I was chuckling a bit in disbelief. I didn't know what to say. Mr. Klein had told him that he would be coming to interview me.

The interview was set for August 6th. At that time I had told only my wife and kids about the award. The fellows at the shop found out because they were cleaning and sprucing up the shop area beyond belief during the week before the interview. They did a great job. Thanks to Rick Becker (assistant to Mike) and the whole crew, the shop area was in great shape. I had no

idea how much stuff I had to throw out that early in the season. When they were done, the room was actually brighter, because there was more floor space reflecting the light.

On the morning of the interview, I found out the meeting time had been pushed back to afternoon. It was a typical August day, temperature in the 90s and 94% humidity. I was definitely going to take a shower before the interview. I had planned on going to the clubhouse locker room to spruce up. At 11:15 a.m., I got a call from Mike that Mr. Klein would arrive within ten minutes. I didn't know it was possible, but I started sweating even more. Mike said, "Just put on a fresh t-shirt and you'll be good to go."

After introductions were made, Mr. Klein and I went into my office. Soon I was more relaxed and referring to my visitor as Brad. He got a kick out of my many photographs. We talked about several topics, including tasks that are outside the normal job description. For instance, simply putting air in the wheel of a bag cart for a patron, or tightening a spike in a golf shoe. Coincidentally, a golfer came in the shop as we were touring the area. The golfer asked for some gasoline and a rag so he could get some sticky goop left behind by a decal off the shaft of his driver. I got some carburetor choke spray from a cabinet instead. After the shaft was cleaned, the golfer thanked me and went on his way to the third tee. Mr. Klein got a big kick out of this. I told him that without the customer I wouldn't have a job. We took some pictures of the shop, and of some older equipment that is still used on a regular basis. I talked about my time here at the golf course and realized, again, how good I have it and how happy I am here. Good people to work with and great amenities are very important for enjoyment and success at the job.

Two weeks later I was handed a rough draft of an article based on the interview. After reading it, I was very excited and proud. I couldn't wait to show my family a copy. To have gone that far in the process for Technician of the Year was enjoyable and gratifying. There are many other capable, experienced technicians out there. The recognition I have received from the park district and the support of my family and co-workers is a great achievement in itself.

On September 6th Mike came screeching into the shop and said that *Turf Net Magazine* was on-line with pictures of the six finalists on the front cover. I cracked up that it had gotten this far. I immediately called Mary (my bride) at work so she could check it out. That afternoon, when checking the mail box, I found *Turf Net Magazine* (I had never received it before). I felt like a little kid with a report card full of 'A's as I rushed into the house. I also logged on to see it on the web. What a gas! I was laughing out loud. I was home alone, except for my dog, so I told him his name made it into the article.

The results of the contest came out in October. Congratulations to Jim Stuart of Stone Mountain Golf Club (GA) for receiving the *Gold Wrench Award!* I now have an even better realization of how many talented, qualified people have a great career in golf equipment maintenance and repair. I want to thank everyone who supported me all these years, and hope I continue to deserve it.

I hope all of you had a great season on the course and enjoyed your families and friends. Now it's time to slow down a bit, give thanks for what we have, and give to those who are without. **-OC**

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