

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

By PAUL R. MacDONALD



Just as in the movies, golf too, has its stars, its glamorous figures. But it also has its anti-heros as well. Who are these enigmatic characters? They are the men too busy for public relations! Instead of polishing the apple in the public eye, they are tending the apple and its blossoms. The golf course superintendent is finally emerging from the bushes. Today's golf course superintendent must literally be a man for all seasons — Botanist, chemist, engineer, accountant — these are but a few of his roles. At some courses he is also owner, manager, and professional and all that that entails. By the way, don't be surprised if the superintendent turns out to be a female.

The golf course superintendent must also be a man of disappearances. In a sense he ghost writes the entire course. He may arrive at daybreak or long after midnight for watering or some unforeseen crisis. He is on call with his patient twenty-four hours a day. Tour professionals are the egoists of the game; superintendents tend to remain invisible. Their rewards are not trophies or prize monies but rather the satisfaction of controlling the major asset of a golf club - the golf course itself. He is the linchpin between the appreciation of the members and the dreams of the green committee. His joy is in the craftsmanship of his art.

Viewed from a financial perspective, we notice that the maintenance and turf equipment side of golf annually expends more than **one billion dollars** as compared to other market expenditures: golf balls - ninety million; golf clubs - two hundred ten million; golf clothes and shoes - three hundred million; or even food and beverages that reaches nine hundred-seventy million. So, not only does the superintendent manage the major asset, the golf course itself, but revenues to maintain this asset are the highest in the game.

In this age of scarcity and of regulation the golf course superintendent qualifies as golf's most highly educated person. Over fifty percent are college educated, while many have advanced degrees. As in other professions, he may become certified by passing a six-hour examination after becoming a member of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America, but he is also required to be licensed by his state as a certified pesticide applicator. Amongst other things, he must understand turfgrasses, chemicals that control turfgrasses, machinery, fertilization and new sophisticated irrigation systems as well. Despite such proficiency and scientific knowledge, and technical training notwithstanding, it may be many golfing seasons before the custodial image that has stereotyped the superintendent in golf can hold par with the concept of the professional.

How ironic then that the golf course superintendent's most awesome opponent eludes all of this scientific knowledge, i.e. the forces of nature herself. As far as landscaping, his insight must encompass knowledge of different grasses, trees, shrubs, soils, soil compositions, plant diseases such as nematodes and dollar spot and their cures; when it comes to wind patterns, humidity, rainfall and snowfalls, the golf course superintendent must be more alchemist than chemist.

How would you program maintenance chores at the world's highest championship golf course — The Ranch at Keystone, Colorado — over 9,000 feet high in the Rockies? Lou Haines, the new Director of Grounds, has this problem and hopefully the solutions. His father, Jim Haines, Superintendent for many years at Denver Country Club is noted for his invention of a tree root cutter and a leaf raker. Haines Sr., incidentally, was one of the first superintendents to be the recipient of the USGA Green Section Award.

Malcolm R. McLaren, a GCSAA Past President, developed a turf slicer at his club, Canterbury, in Cleveland in preparation for the 1946 USGA Open. This was one of the first attempts at aeration and no mean accomplishment.

Green committee chairmen, eager to leave their imprint on their golf courses, may also be called anti-heros, but many get a good education in the process. They seldom appreciate the value of the superintendent. David C. Holler, Superintendent of the prestigious Gulph Mills Golf Club in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, has aptly expressed a superintendent's lament: "... a green chairman is proficient in his own field, but he seldom has experience in agronomy; yet he assumes responsibility to club members for the condition of the golf course. The golf superintendent knows his business - he is a professional - so let him run it, just as you allow a department manager to run his operation."

This is not to say, however, that superintendents represent an amorphous mass of nameless men. The name Joe Valentine, may someday be as popular as Arnold Palmer's for his contribution to the game in his discovery of Merion bluegrass. Without a public relations firm or press corps to accelerate his fame, the Valentine accomplishment has meaning for every golfer and will be looked upon as one of the major achievements of this era.

Incidentally, do you know or would you recognize the superintendent of your golf club? It is more than likely that you are acquainted with your club professional, having had lessons or bought equipment and you may even know your board-of-directors, and, of course, your favorite caddy. Yet, your golf course superintendent is probably known to you only through his artistry. The next time someone mentions the word professional you might consider asking which professional.

Like other professions, women are becoming interested in this challenging field. The Golf Course Superintendents Association lists four who are superintendent members - up one-hundred percent from the previous year. A relatively new trend emerging too, is the addition of ladies to maintenance crews at some golf courses. It is not uncom-

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tendent Dan Jones and Club Manager Gerry Marlatt. At least one day every week during the season they meet early in the morning for coffee and communication. Bill is a dedicated and loyal professional who loves his club and is proud to show it.

The men's course record at Banyan is 69 from the blue tees. The course has a rating of 72.7 and 73.0 from the whites. The average green size at Banyan is six thousand square feet. They consist of TifDwarf Bermudagrass. Due to contamination in the original greens all 18 greens were replanted the last two years. Tees, fairways and rough are comprised of TifWay 419 Bermudagrass. One hundred of Banyan's total 200 acres are maintained as fine turf and another 34 acres are deep sparkling lakes.

The soil profile consists mainly of sugar sand and huge deposits of clay. With all its intrinsic beauty Banyan does have a few problems. The lush tropical overgrowth that provides so much landscape also excludes much needed sunlight. To combat this problem Golf Course Superintendent Dan Jones has a program of trimming where necessary and even replacing plant species if trimming is not effective. Poor drainage and excessive rain don't exactly compliment each other so drainage is an ongoing project. Rain is one thing that Dan cannot control. To date Banyan has spent over \$20,000 on drainage and plans to do much more. The results have been of significant benefit to the club. In addition to improving turf quality of poorly drained areas there has been a reduction in the number of days the course was closed due to wet conditions.

Dan Jones has been employed at Banyan since March 25, 1980. Prior to that he was Golf Course Superintendent at Turnberry Isle Country Club, Miami, Florida for five years. At Turnberry he introduced the use of the White Amur for weed control in lakes. He spent another five years at The Dorado Beach Hotel in Puerto Rico before going to Turnberry. In 1965 Dan was a hotel engineer at Estate Good Hope Hotel and Fountain Valley Golf Course on St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The golf club on St. Croix had gone through three Golf Course Superintendents and as a result of this ask Dan if he would be interested in assuming the responsibility. Dan's first thought was "I don't even know a golf ball from a cue ball." Through encouragement from consultant Dr. Max Brown like, "Desire is the greatest factor," Dan accepted his first Golf Course Superintendent's position. And now most of you probably know the rest of the story, Dan has become one of the most popular, innovative and successful Superintendents in America. He is respected by his peers and employers alike. Through his efforts with others The Florida Green has become the standout magazine in its class across the nation. The condition of his golf course? Superb!

Mr. David Fermon, is Club President. He is a man who appreciates the condition of his golf



Greens Chairman Bobby Jacobsen and Dan Jones inspect the Golf Course.

course and the capabilities of his staff. Mr. Fermon informed me that Banyan members are proud of their beautiful club. During our conversation he closely paralleled much of what Joe Lee had said about the course's character. In closing Mr. Fermon's thoughts and objectives were very clear. He emphasized that Banyan was a golf course you could enjoy playing every day and Mr. Fermon is dedicated to preserving its top condition.

And so . . . another day comes to a close at Banyan. As daylight gives way to darkness "Banyan Golf Club" becomes "Banyan Nature's Playground." Owls, rabbits and raccoons act out their daily lives in harmony with man and nature. The wind and the crickets join together to serenade sleepy squirrels to bed. And, if you should be aroused from a deep sleep with a club in your hand, Well . . . be nice to the animals.

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mon to see a comely ms. in a T-shirt, riding down the fairway or weeding a flower bed.

George W. Cleaver, the new President of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association and himself superintendent at Chestnut Ridge Country Club, Lutherville, Maryland - a suburb of Baltimore - for more than eighteen years, said recently ". . . being a golf course superintendent is a tricky, tough business. It is not something that can be standardized as is a certified public accountant or a certified life underwriter. There are just too many variables, and many of the major factors, such as weather, budgets, golfers' desires are out of the individual superintendent's hands. Golf courses are like living things and no two courses are alike."

Besides keeping the grass green and mowed, superintendents must conform to many new stipulations and regulations that have evolved from recent environmental studies. While custodial images are hard to eradicate, the sophistication of the golf course superintendent's role is gradually bringing him not only the position, but the recognition he deserves. Perhaps that bumper sticker that reads "Have you hugged your dog lately" should have as its corollary, "Have you hugged your superintendent lately"?

EDITOR'S NOTE:

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