

The Gator Growls

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The maintenance complex buildings and area used for storage of materials, parking and repairs of equipment as well as employee areas come in many various designs and concepts of what the facility should be; principally those of the golf course superintendent in charge at the time of construction. We won't endeavor to elaborate on the facets but will give an outline of what the principal areas of the complex should consist:

- A- EQUIPMENT REPAIR * PARTS STORAGE
- B- EQUIPMENT PARKING
- C- SMALL EQUIPMENT & TOOL STORAGE
- D- CHEMICAL STORAGE
- E- MATERIALS STORAGE
- F- EMPLOYEE FACILITIES
 - 1- Lunch and meeting area
 - 2- Rest rooms and showers, both for men and women
 - 3- Employee and guests parking
 - 4- Maintenance administration offices
 - 5- Nursery, greenhouses, plant propagation areas

The most possibly over-looked of all new golf facilities and the least considered is the land site as well as the areas above listed. For some reason even the best of all well planned projects never consider this part of the project until the last conceivable moment and the area is more than likely to be allotted the barest minimum of project funds once begun. Primarily the site is usually the poorest on the property and the buildings put up at the least possible costs imaginable. With the modern 18 hole equipment inventory fast approaching the three quarter million dollar figure, this amounts to nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ to a third the course costs less land value. The thousands of dollars in equipment and the additional thousands eventually spent in its maintenance and upkeep are probably the least planned and thought of part of a multi-million dollar package. Anyone involved in course maintenance who has skimmed on this phase the past twenty or so years has already paid probably ten times the costs of a well planned and built maintenance complex at the time of the original construction and that is more than likely a very conservative estimate.

Ideally the area should be well drained and as centrally located as is economically feasible with access to the outside and a minimum of interference to play. The "old barn" concept is no longer practical. Modern buildings, either pre-fab or built on site, can be attractive in themselves as well as esthetically landscaped to provide an appearance that can be conducive to the entire scope of the project. This heart of an expensive operation can no longer be placed in an "out of sight out of mind" location within the highly costly projects now necessary to attract the potential buyer. This area is now the hub of the entire

complex wheel. The golf complex will as a general rule reflect the attitudes employed in the location and buildings essential to the upkeep of the surroundings. In simple language, the long run results in the golf course itself will be, in most cases, exactly the parallel of its maintenance H.Q. and never the twain shall meet.

I have recently visited four of the type of projects described and these are the findings. All top of the line with so called unlimited funds to attract nothing but top echelon potential clientele to set the scene:

#1- First class all the way including the maintenance complex, with an operation center equal to many of the fine homes; that was ready almost at the time the course was to be planted.

#2- First rate all the way but the maintenance center was a greenhouse frame with a little plastic. Now this center is in one end of the cart shed and the complex maintenance area is still on hold months after opening with nothing in sight to date. At the least, \$100M in equipment is parked in the weather.

#3- At the time of opening for play this project had all its equipment, conservatively estimated to be nearly \$485M not only exposed to the weather but to trespassers as well with not even a Port-A-John for its employees.

#4- This course is now under the super's care with over \$350M in equipment under the same conditions as the above but the \$5 million dollar club house is nearly completed and the golf maintenance center was just getting its slab poured while there.

Just exactly where the fault lies is not our concern but no highly successful project can expect to realize the full profit potential of the project when such planning is delayed or over-looked until the last minute. In the opinions of fellow supers, this attitude toward the equipment alone will decrease its operational life at the least, a ration of two to one. One month without proper cover and an adequate area to perform the barest preventative maintenance procedures is equal to two months of proper conditions.

For years, the Florida answer has been to put all small equipment inside and the larger outside or if fortunate, under an overhead roof or shade tree. This is not likely a feasible answer when a hydraulic fairway unit alone is pushing the \$50M mark and units half that size and smaller running an average of \$15M plus. Moisture conditions in Florida no longer call for just a roof or even a three sided building. We all have seen equipment stored in totally enclosed buildings even with either power or wind

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driven ventilation so moist during our summer months that the operator must wipe the seat in the morning before use.

With wages hitting the .10 to .15 per minute rates, costs in employee training and fringe benefits, turn-over, etc., prime consideration is now demanded to be directed toward the employee area described. After all, nearly one-third their day and one-half their waking moments are job related. With wall-to-wall cart paths and the emphasis on "let 'em play," adverse weather conditions dictate unpleasant working days. Employees need adequate areas to warm and dry themselves as well as a decent area in which to eat their meals and to take their breaks. Rest rooms and showers are no longer luxuries but required by law. Proper employee parking without the possibility of vehicles being hit by either equipment or golf balls is almost mandatory. The maintenance complex and the accompanying facilities for all employees sets the attitude for morale and work productivity. If you, the superintendent and/or the club, "don't think of me and your equipment, why should I think of you, your equipment or your golf course." Just think of the dollars wasted in all areas where this type of attitude prevails. This is not an un-common occurrence even in today's world but those displaying these attitudes are generally not in our business too long.

Each aspect of the ideal maintenance center must be thoroughly planned and designed as well as executed. Not only for the present but for future expansion if that is even a remote possibility. If this area is limited in origin and later plans call for expansion, just think of trying to operate within the area originally designed for 9 or 18 holes and the future calls for 9, 27, 36 or even 72 holes. This is especially true when the available landsite can not provide the necessary space and the operation must be decentralized as well. Location of just the fuel storage distribution can be a costly problem once restrictions have been set. I have seen such operations where travel time alone was 15 minutes each way. In addition to the risen fuel costs, at \$6.00 per hour, that is another \$3.00 at each fueling, and this doesn't reflect additional wear.

The only answer is to PLAN, PLAN, then PLAN some more if these problems are to be possibly avoided. Fellow supers are the best source of information and who best to get directions than from someone who has already travelled the road. Even better, get your superiors to go with you and take your plans. Better still, call in a number of your peers that you know have had the experience you are planning for; let them meet and have a brainstorm with all concerned and make suggestions for your consideration. Over the years I have planned and seen through 5 complexes and the best of all in-put I received was from the peers and on site examination of what they had done. Fantastic changes have been made in nearly all of these complexes and all for the better. We all know that funds are the greatest limiting factor and that Taj Mahals do not make a complex but excellent planning and judicious use of the funds available beats a shed, a shade tree, bare dirt floors, and a pick-up for your office. There are still a few of these around, so use them too; when you make your plans. ■