

Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

By JAMES P. CALLAGHAN
Rio Mar Country Club

An Interview With a "Good Superintendent"

Progress in the golf-turf industry over the past two decades has been phenomenal. Tom Burrows, Golf Course Superintendent of the Turtle Creek Club in Tequesta, has endeavored to make the best of his 22 years as a superintendent and is considered one of the finest by his peers. He has witnessed the transition from greenkeeper to total manager first hand and has graciously agreed to share his comments on what makes a good golf superintendent with the "Florida Green" readers.

Basically, Tom's approach to becoming a successful golf course superintendent has been achieved by utilizing the SEP (Serious, Enthusiastic and Prepared) method. He commented, "To be a good superintendent, you must take your job seriously. The golfers out there might be playing a game — but we're not!" Tom continued, "Enthusiasm is a must. There are times when this job can really get to you, but one must keep his chin up with a smile on his face. Enthusiasm is the best insurance for job security." With respect to preparation, "through careful and complete preparation in all phases of golf course management, a good superintendent will rarely be caught off guard," Tom stated.

Through the SEP approach, Tom always strives to become a better manager with constant self-improvement. He stated that a good superintendent will continue his education by attending turf conferences, night schools, and seminars. He will also keep his nose in the various trade publications available to keep abreast of pertinent information

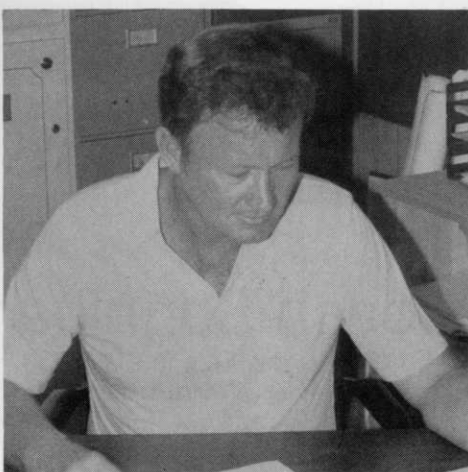
and developments. He further emphasized, "A successful superintendent is active in local, regional and national associations. He must share ideas with his fellow supers — an ostrich-like convergence rarely cuts it today." Tom added, "At many meetings there is an opportunity to play golf on other courses which is certainly a valuable avenue for discovering new ideas."

Tom, who holds an A.S. degree in Turfgrass Management from Penn State, also emphasizes confidence in yourself but don't be afraid to seek help when needed. He commented that if you come across a problem (who doesn't!) that you can always turn to a fellow superintendent, U.S.G.A., or university personnel for advice.

Burrows is a strong advocate for delegating responsibilities. He said, "If a superintendent is always running around trying to get the work done himself, he won't have the time to become a good superintendent and will never get to enjoy retirement — because he won't be around."

Use of public relations is another pathway to success for today's superintendent. Tom states that he makes himself presentable and available at all times to his membership. He often visits the pro shop and clubhouse, especially during busy periods. Lunch in the dining room is scheduled to insure his access to the membership.

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A good superintendent is serious. . . prepared . . .

and enthusiastic!

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He keeps his employer informed of his overall progress and attends greens committee and board meetings — PREPARED. He tries to play golf at his course at least once a week in order to gain the same perspective of the golf course as the members have.

Having trained over 60 apprentice superintendents, Tom is keen with his employees for they are a reflection on him. He stresses pride and neatness at all times. This is also carried over into the appearance and operation at the maintenance facility. Tom stated, "Take care of anything which will reflect on you and your management abilities. Organization doesn't stop on the 18th green!"

Tom's abilities and success are definitely of high caliber. Before coming to Florida, he was Property Manager and Golf Course Superintendent for the Playboy Club Hotels in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and Great Gorge, New Jersey. Prior to taking over at Turtle Creek eight years ago, he was Golf Course Superintendent at Mariner Sands. Tom has served on the Executive Committee of the Midwest, South Florida, Palm Beach, Treasure Coast and Florida Golf Course Superintendents Associations. Recently he was nominated for Vice President of the Florida G.C.S.A.

In closing, having the right attitude plays the most important part in becoming a good superintendent. Tom Burrows' SEP approach relies on two basic attitudes — seriousness and enthusiasm. Add preparation to the right attitude and you can't miss!

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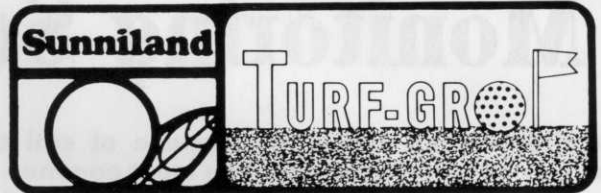
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