

DIVOTS

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The Superintendent and the Barn

At the beginning of the day the plan is to begin to prepare for overseeding and/or renovation. Or maybe it is to send the crews out to hook up the hose to the fire hydrant to mist the ice rinks for the resurfacing for the day's skating party. No matter what part of the country your facility is located in, the plan for the day begins at the maintenance barn. The building may be a new structure with an expandable computer maintenance program or an older structure with a roll top desk with pencils worn and dull from planning and recording activities and records. Whether your maintenance barn is one of these or somewhere in between, the game plan for the day starts at the barn.

The maintenance building, with the superintendents office strategically placed for daily operations, is the hub of the maintenance plan. All roads lead from the barn to the many different areas of grounds operations. The maintenance barn reminds me of the dugout at our ball park. After the game plan has been formed, the players leave the dugout and head to the field to play the game as a team. When the superintendent finalizes his game plan for the day, the crew is ready to leave the barn. As the crew (a team) heads out to the course, each has a part to play in the daily plan.

The crew is out on the course and the superintendent is back in his office planning for the next day's operations. The barn takes on an atmosphere all its own. When the pungent smell of the engines warming up and the sound of the engines echoing in the peaks of the barn rafters fade, it's quiet again. As the superintendent, I enjoy sitting for a few moments in the barn and listening to the sounds. What's that? The click of the time clock, it seems to be the heart of this living barn. Clang, oh yes, the mechanic is still at his station. The lifeline to the outside world let's me know it is still there. "Maintenance, may I help you? Yes, you can tell the pro that all greens are being mowed today." After that short interruption of pro shop anxiety, I have the chance to feel this living barn again. The hum of a distant machine, I can hear it getting closer and closer and then begins to fade into the distance. This barn has ears to tell them that John has finished the putting greens and is heading out toward the main course to join the rest of the team on the links.

As I look out the barn door, the fog has set in. I can't see my course through the thick morning fog, but do I have to

see? The familiar sounds coming back to the barn tell me that all is well. I can hear the whir of the reels under the heavy sound of the diesel pulling the fairway units. The sound is not too distant but not really close either. Now I know Larry is on number 10 fairway — good job, Larry. I can hear the rattle of the Cushman tailgate leaving number six green on the way to change another cup. This old building can tell you a lot if you just take time to listen.

Well, it is time to leave the barn to go out and check on the team. By the way, I talk to each of the players on our maintenance team every day. As I walk into the mechanics area John looks a little apprehensive. He says, "Don listen" — oh yes, the old barn has yet another message. As we listen the hum gets closer and closer, but its the wrong time of the day. Something is afoul, but John is ready.

The invisible hold this building has on the maintenance team was apparent to me one clear and sunny day. When we were hovering over the complex in a helicopter taking aerial photos, we could see that all roads lead to the maintenance barn — like the web of the spider reaching out and bringing the equipment and men back to the barn from the farthest fairway. Groundsmen head in from the clubhouse grounds. The irrigation man is starting in from checking control satellites. Small mowing equipment and their operators scurry from their appointed duties. Each are leaving separate points and following the web back to the barn.

The barn is alive with movement and sounds once again. The familiar morning sounds have long since faded. The foggy eyes and the slow but assuring good mornings have changed to stories of the night before activities, and what is going on after the boys work is completed. John asks if anyone saw the gator on number ten fairway this morning. A couple of affirmative answers. Russell asks if anyone saw the blond on number six just before noon. Unanimous! The heart of the barn seems to tell the team that the machines are waiting to head out on the fingers of the web once again. The dust settles. The barn and the superintendent are once again awaiting the sounds of the equipment returning with the team players at the end of the game plan for the day. It's quiet in the barn once again. The players are gone now. Thanks for a good job, team. ■

P.S. Congratulations to our club manager, Jim Smith, on qualifying for the U.S. open. The grounds maintenance staff.