

The Gator Growls

By
Sandra P. Carmouche



Rapport Essential

Developing rapport with golf course members is as essential to the golf course superintendent as mowers and fertilizers.

For the superintendent it is a tool that can be used to promote his ideas, justify his methods, or solve problems concerning maintenance and condition of the course. For the golfers, it provides a necessary opportunity to make suggestions and be included in decisions that will ultimately affect their game.

In order to establish good communication with members, Bob Shevlin of Eagle Creek in Naples and Mark Black of Bonita Bay in Bonita Springs offer the following suggestions.

Talk is the simplest, most effective, form of communication. But before any conversation can take place, golfers must have access to the superintendent.

"Make yourself noticed," advises Bob Shevlin, who frequently stops to chat with people while making his rounds. He also has coffee in the Pro Shop every morning where members can easily approach him.

High visibility also has the advantage of reminding everyone that the superintendent is responsible for playing conditions on the course. Golfers who only see assistants and laborers working may soon wonder why they need a superintendent.

When listening to suggestions from members, Mark Black says, "Keep an open mind."

An automatic negative response from the superintendent creates bad feelings. But while some of the ideas that golfers come up with will improve their game, others may benefit only a choice few.

If, for example, 90 percent of the members at a club want the tee markers moved up, then the superintendent would do well to listen and comply with their wishes.

On the other hand, when Mr. Putter wants all the trees to the left of number six fairway cut down because that is where he always duck-hooks his ball, a polite explanation of why that can't be done is in order.

It is important to remember that requests from golfers are of genuine concern to them. Any lack of understanding or knowledge on their part can easily be remedied by the superintendent who explains his decisions.

"What it boils down to," says Shevlin, "is educating the members."

For instance, most golfers don't understand that verticutting fairways is necessary to remove thatch which causes disease, worms, etc. All they know is that it's a messy inconvenience.

It is up to the superintendent to make members understand what is being done and there are a number of aids that can use to convey information.

Quarterly or semiannual typewritten reports can communicate to members what goals the superintendent has for the course and how he plans to accomplish them.

Likewise, monthly club newsletters could include a column written by the superintendent. This is an excellent opportunity to let members know why, for example, the greens have to be aerified.

Slide presentations are great for purposes of illustrating accomplishments at board and member meetings. Before and after shots of turf showing how conditions have been improved can be used when evaluating employees. They are also helpful for showing the progress being made on a project or pointing out problem areas.

Discussion should follow in which questions are answered and input is taken. Another item to consider in developing rapport is personal appearance. While clothes may not make the superintendent, they do contribute to the opinions formed by others.

"Obviously, suits and ties are out, but, as Mark Black warns, "If you're going to come on like a farmer, you're going to be treated like a farmer."

Whether a superintendent works for a developer or is employed by a private, semi-private, or public course,

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good communication is imperative for establishing priorities.

Since the golf course will be a selling point for developers, it must be maintained to look good and play well at all times. Private clubs, however, may be forced to choose between overseeding in the winter and buying a new greensmower in the spring.

Whatever the situation, both developers and members have to rely on the expertise and advice of the superintendent on matters concerning the golf course.

And no matter what the circumstances, "The bottom line," says Black, "is that members are your bosses."

The ability to communicate with them is as important to the superintendent as the knowledge he possesses of turf. ■

South Florida PGA Pro-Supt. Tournament

By Larry Bush

STUART, Fla. — Rick Dytrych and Pete Brooks of the Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Club won the fourth annual South Florida PGA Section Pro-Superintendent tournament on a match of cards Friday at Mariner Sands.

They had birdied the par-3 12th hole, selected in a blind draw by tournament officials, enroute to a seven under par 65 on the 6,700-yard Gold course.

Also posting a 65 in the net better ball event were pro Dan St. Louis, Wellington Club, West Palm Beach, and J.B. Branstrom, the golf course superintendent at Palm Beach Polo & CC. But St. Louis and Branstrom had bogied the 12th hole.

Dytrych and St. Louis each made four birdies. Dytrych finished with a 72, St. Louis a 75.

Low pro in the tournament which drew 43 twosomes was Roger Kennedy, Pompano Beach CC, with a one

under par 71 on nines of 36-35.

Gleneagles superintendent Gary Price made a hole-in-one at the 165-yard 15th hole with a 6-iron. "It hit about three feet in front of the hole and rolled in," said his pro, Lew Hersey. They teamed for a total of 75, out of the money.

John Shulock of Vero Beach, an American League umpire who worked the recent baseball World Series, was the guest speaker during the awards cocktail party.

Tournament leaders:

Pro-Superintendent Better Ball

65 — Rick Dytrych-Pete Brooks, Palm Beach Par 3 GC, 32-33. Dan St. Louis-J.B. Branstrom, Wellington Club, 33-32. Dytrych-Brooks won match of cards. Dytrych-Brooks \$210, St. Louis-Branstrom \$175.

66 — Don Beattie-Tom McGuire, Pompano Beach CC, 33-33. Jack Seltzer-Dave Holler, Stuart Yacht & CC, 33-33. Sean Skelly-Bob Jacks, St. Andrews CC, Boca Raton, 35-31. \$132.33 per team.

67 — Bob Komarinetz-Gary Gump, G&RC at Eastpointe, Palm Beach Gardens, 35-32. \$105.

68 — Gordy Powell-Paul Bondeson, Bocaire CC, Boca Raton, 33-35. Scott Mailloux-Walt McMahon, Bear Lakes CC, West Palm Beach, 37-31. Bobby Benson-Paul Crawford, Palm Beach CC, 31-37. Chuck Knebels-Kevin Downing, Mariner Sands CC, Stuart, 35-33. Randy Cavanaugh-Mike Cooper, Jupiter Island CC, Hobe Sound, 34-34. Roger Kennedy-Scott Zakany, Pompano Beach CC, 35-33. \$46.50 per team.

Low Professionals

71 — Kennedy, 36-35. \$100.

72 — Dytrych, 39-33. Seltzer, 35-37. Komarinetz, 37-35. \$55.

75 — John Francis, Lago Mar CC, Plantation, 38-37. Ken Szuch, Kings Bay CC, Miami, 39-36. St. Louis, 39-36. Benson, 37-38. \$13.75. ■

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