



Central Florida Crowfoots



To Tee Or Not To Tee — That Is The Question!

By Joel D. Jackson

To tee it up or not to tee it up, that is the question —
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the
Slings and arrows of insects and irate golfers,
Or to take up your clubs despite a sea of troubles
And by playing golf end them. To play, to enjoy
The game; and by enjoy we say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That golf course maintenance is heir to daily;

'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wished. To par, to birdie —
to eagle, perchance to ace, ay there's the rub,
For in those scores of golf what dreams may come.
When we have shuffled off this duffer's coil,
Must give us pause; there's the respect
That makes calamity of so high a handicap.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of
double and triple bogeys.
The sandbagger's wrong, the honest player's contumely...
... To grunt and sweat at golf after a busy day
But that the dread of something after work
The irrigation leak, the unmowed rough
From whose bourn no traveller returns; puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make golfers of us all,
and the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied over with the pale cast of true course conditions
And projects from the greens committee
With this regard their priorities turn awry
And lose the name of action. Soft you now
The fair putting surfaces — 9.5 on the stimpmeter,
Be all my putts remembered.

Like Hamlet, my golf game is also a tragedy. One of my own making, to be sure, but a result of my priorities. The answer to the question "Should a superintendent play golf?" The answer is YES. To the question "Must a superintendent play golf?" The answer is I DON'T KNOW. I think it is rare to find a person who can keep a golf course in top condition, and respond to problems with the playing conditions if he doesn't experience them first hand. Such individuals do exist and they are successful, however, they are rare.

By playing his golf course the superintendent is offered a much more detailed look at the true playing conditions than can be assimilated on a "ride thru" filled with the many distractions that make up our hectic days. The priorities that we set for our maintenance staff may be based on sound agronomic principles, but they may not fully consider the needs of the golfers who play the course. We need to keep the golfers' priorities in mind or we may be answering some unpleasant questions from our employers. By playing more we can appreciate the needs of the "consumers" or members.

Another primary benefit from playing more golf is that the superintendent can strengthen his ability to communicate to his members and employers, by talking the same language and comparing results on the course. The golfing superintendent is brought closer to the international family of golfers, and he can better appreciate the accomplishments of professional and amateur alike if he has shared the "rub of the green." I have been fortunate to visit Augusta and behold the near perfection of that emerald jewel in golf's crown, and I played Pebble Beach in 1982 right after the U.S. Open and found the spot where Tom Watson made his "Miracle Chip" on the 17th hole. These things wouldn't mean as much if I didn't play golf.

The superintendent who plays golf, regardless of skill level, has an additional tool in his management arsenal to help him keep his course in better "playing" condition and enhance his professional image. We should all try to improve our skill level to maximize the enjoyment of the game when we play, and to become more discerning about the actual conditions of our courses.

As the role of the golf course superintendent changes and he is asked to do more for his club because of his talents, versatility, and professionalism, he risks losing some of the intimate contact with the course that made him successful in the first place. By playing the course, he can maintain that contact hopefully with the understanding and support of his club.

Good golfing to you all! ■