

# The Gator Growls



## PLAYING THE GAME IS PART OF THE JOB

By Norman E. Carmouche

Are there any great chefs who don't eat? How many great artists do you know of who are blind? Would a deaf person make a great musician?

How then can a superintendent be great if he doesn't play golf?

Of course there are exceptions to every rule; look at Beethoven. He managed to compose while deaf. Likewise, there are a few excellent superintendents who don't play golf. The point here is that the exceptions are few.

I started playing golf the summer after I graduated from high school. It was just something to do. Within a week I was hooked.

I am a golf course superintendent because of my participation in the game of golf. In fact, most of my success in life can be attributed to the game.

For me, golf mirrors life. There are never-ending peaks and valleys, only you control your destiny, and you can't blame success or failure on anyone but yourself.

Many years ago when I was searching for a college major every profession in the world came up. Doctor, lawyer, architect, teacher, business, even golf pro. I floundered around for eight years in pre-med, architecture, and finally finished as a teacher.

I landed a job at my old high school and immediately started a golf team, becoming the first golf coach. My team won their district the first year and was state runner-up the second year. I guess a little bit of my enthusiasm for the game rubbed off.

As a teacher I got to play almost every day and that was great; but teaching wasn't rewarding enough for me and I began looking for something else. I actually considered becoming a teaching pro when a counselor showed me a brochure from Lake City Community College.

Seventeen years later I am a very happy, successful golf course superintendent and never once have I looked back and second-guessed my decision to go to Lake City.

When the question is asked whether or not a superintendent should play golf, I have only one answer.

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If a superintendent wants success in this business he must play golf. Certainly there are a few successful superintendents who never play. There are a few successful basketball and football coaches who never played their respective games. But they are few.

How can a golf course superintendent get his course ready for championship play if he doesn't know what it takes to make a course play at its best? How can a superintendent begin to talk intelligently to a greens committee about course playing conditions without playing the game?

Playing golf with members helps to promote a good working environment for the superintendent. I don't suggest a superintendent get involved in a money game with his members, but he should on occasion play with his greens chairman and other club officials.

The Everglades Chapter has started a new annual tournament in which the superintendent plays in a foursome with his greens chairman, club president or owner, and either the club manager or another club officer. After a day out on the course with these people you really learn to appreciate one another.

Playing golf is, or should be, a part of the superintendent's job. Without the game there would be no job and superintendents owe it to themselves to promote the game.

You may not have to play to be a golf course superintendent, but you do have to play to be a great golf course superintendent. ■