



Suncoast Sails

By Jim Svabek, Superintendent
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To Play Or Not To Play . . . Should Not Even Be A Question

I remember when I first stepped on a golf course. I was looking for a summer job. I had never even seen a golf course before and did not understand the game. Well, to my Father's joy, I got the job and I've been on a golf course ever since.

For awhile, the game never intrigued me at all, but the more I became involved in the maintenance of the course, the more I began to wonder why we did certain things; why did we verti-cut those beautiful greens and turn them brown on purpose and why did we cover them with dirt, so the members could complain after we had them looking so good, and so on and so on. As an employee, though, I still did not want to give up my free time to play on the course where I spent most of my day working.

After a couple of years, I had to make a decision on what I wanted to do as a career, should I stay on the golf course or look for something else. My boss, also, had an idea and at that point he asked me to be his assistant. That's when I decided to stay.

Eventually, I started to play golf. I don't really remember

why. I do remember that every time I hit the ball down the middle, it would end up in the right rough in the trees. After a few lessons from the Pro, I would hit the ball down the middle and it would end up in the left rough. I feel that my golf game has been the same for the last 20 years.

In those years, not many superintendents played golf, but what a revelation it was for me to see why we had to do all of that work to keep the course in such good condition. I don't think anyone could appreciate all that hard work without ever playing the game. There is a certain pleasure in looking out over a golf course that is in great condition and well manicured . . . but there is something missing, if you can not play it. I believe that you can not fully appreciate a course unless you play it. It is like growing the "perfect" apple and then not being able to eat it. You can not enjoy the fruit of your labor.

The obvious reason to play is, of course, to see your course the same way those who pay to play it see it. I know I see areas that I would not normally see in my daily tour of the course. It is much easier to tell the condition of my course by playing it. I experience, first hand, what everyone else sees.

I do not think that a superintendent today can be complete in his work, unless he plays the game. It is vital that he sees his course the way those who are looking for enjoyment see it. It is not how you play the game that counts, it is that you play it that's important. ■



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