

The Laborer Is Worthy Of His Reward

By Cheryl Jones

After working on them, driving on them, inspecting and appraising their condition, color, and overall general health, prescribing the best antidotes to keep them healthy and happy, spending more time on them than you do with your wife, who on earth would want to get back on the greens after quitting time?

An avid golfing superintendent.

Fortunate indeed is the man (or woman!) who can both work and play on the greens they call their second home away from home!

There seemingly is no negative response to the question: "Should superintendents play golf?" Common sense and a random survey provided the answer and it's a deafening YES!

Mark Henderson, superintendent of Atlantis Golf Club in West Palm Beach was kind enough to provide some insights on the subject. He has been at the 380-member private club for just over a year, has eight years experience as a superintendent, and is working towards certi-

fication. Mark is an avid golfer, and though an overdue baby has kept him a little closer to home and family at the time of this interview, he still manages to hit the links once or twice a week. Every course he has worked on in the past has allowed superintendents to play, and Mark admits he probably wouldn't take a job where the owner/board was adamantly against it.

Why should a superintendent play golf?

M.H.: "The first-hand experience of a superintendent on a course is vital. A playing superintendent can get out there and determine the playability of his greens. He can correct problems before they occur, and if a member complains, a playing superintendent will know exactly what he is talking about. Developing a feel for the greens puts him in closer touch with his course. It can often be more work than play — Your eyes are constantly roving, searching for those little things that are often overlooked in the overall day-to-day maintenance. Are the tee markers lined up correctly? Are the pin placements right? You can adjust your work plans for the next day as you go along. If the greens are slow, you may decide to go ahead and double-cut them instead of what you had originally intended to do that day. This prevents members' complaints before they have a chance to come in. It also brings you together with your members and gives you a chance to hear what they have to say about their needs and wants on the course."

THOSE THAT PLAY THE GAME IN ALMOST ALL CASES MAKE THE BEST WORKERS.

The question of why some owners or Boards of Directors do not allow their superintendents to play golf has some possible answers also. Members may not like the fact that they have to pay a pretty penny while employees pay nothing. Certain employees may, in some instances, abuse the privilege. And this could cause golf privileges to be cancelled for all employees.

Those that play the game in almost all cases make the best workers. A random survey of several Palm Beach County superintendents revealed that all thought superintendents should be allowed to play, and all were allowed to, on their respective courses. When asked if assistants and employees should be allowed to play golf, the unanimous response was YES! All courses polled said that their employees were allowed to play; assistants, for the most part, year 'round and employees with certain restrictions ranging from after work (anytime) to specific months of the year or days of the week.

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Happy superintendents stay longer. It seems pretty safe to assume this. If a superintendent is allowed to release the day-to-day tensions from salesmen, insects, weeds, weather, suppliers, crew, etc., it translates into a benefit for the club while costing them nothing. Those extra hours of "trained-eye time" can save them thousands of dollars by spotting problems before they erupt. Being able to play the course you work on provides that extra little motivation to keep the greens beautiful and healthy. You'll go that extra inch, yard, or mile, not only for club, but for yourself as well.

Please allow this writer to take this issue one step further. Should the golfing privilege be extended beyond the superintendent to his assistant and employees? This may raise a few conservative eyebrows and qualms among the owners and Boards of Directors of golf courses, but the potential benefits returned to the clubs are tremendous. When questioned about his views and policies, Henderson again gave the idea an emphatic yes. He has 18 employees and supports their playing, even encourages it.

M.H.: "The Board at Atlantis decided that employee golf privileges were allowed before I came here. Though I have refined the guidelines a little bit, my assistant can play all year 'round, and the other employees may play any afternoon from May thru October. One unique benefit that Atlantis provides to their employees is the use of a cart."

Does knowing the game have a positive impact on their view of their work?

M.H.: "Undoubtedly. For example, take raking sand traps. To a non-player, this isn't significant, but a golfer knows that you don't want any grooves marring the surface and hindering your game. A playing employee understands the little nuances involved which the non-playing employee doesn't instinctively recognize, even though he can be an excellent worker."

Do you think that golfing privileges for an employee is a factor in their staying at a specific course?

M.H.: "Yes, an employee who enjoys the game tends to stay longer at an obliging course, which reduces the turnover rate and helps you keep the good workers. Instead of moving on to another job, he'll stay where he can keep the golfing privilege."

Henderson and his crew (some of which are golfers!) have their hands full at Atlantis Golf Club this year, rebuilding 9 greens and installing a new computer irrigation system on all 27 holes. 18 greens are scheduled to be rebuilt next year.

Every superintendent polled revealed that they would prefer their employees to be golfers, to better understand their jobs. This privilege, from superintendents on down the line, benefits clubs in many ways.

Maybe now is the time for those clubs who do not allow their employees to play golf to re-think their "members only" policies. ■

Post Script: Between the interview and press dates, Mark, Leslie and son Jade welcomed Paris Mills Champagne Henderson into the world! She is an 8 pound, 7 ounce beauty (angel?!). Congratulations Folks!

EFFECTS OF CHEMICALS ON EARTHWORM POPULATIONS

Occasionally we get questions about the effects of chemicals on earthworms. This is a list published in a recent issue of Bug Dope, Ohio State University. Thought it might be of interest.


No effect: Diazinon, Dylox, Guthion, Oftanol, and Proxol.

Increase in Worms: Nitrogen fertilizers, Lime and Nitrate of soda.

Slightly Toxic: Malathion, Dursban, Parathion, Disyston, and Chloro-IPC.

Extremely Toxic: Sevin, Chlordane, Thimet, Temik, Furadan, Dyfonate, Benomyl, Chloropicrin, Methyl Bromide, D-D fumigant, Copper sulfate, Arsenicals, and Sulphate of ammonia.

NOTE; Fertilizer effect may be direct by changing the acidity of the soil, or indirect by changing the form and quantity of the vegetation that ultimately provides food for worms.



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