

DIVOTS

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GCSAA Leader in Education

A certified Golf Course Superintendent has many responsibilities that have to be filled. It is one of those responsibilities that I would like to bring to light in this article.

Today's mail, as usual, consisted of invoices and purchase orders which have to be signed and sent up to Carol, our office manager. She needs these as soon as possible in order to keep my budget in line. I hope that all superintendents let their office personnel know how much they appreciate their help in this important area of golf course management.

But...getting back to my mail...near the end of the stack there is a letter from our Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America's headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas. It reads, "Dear Mr. Kooyer, we are writing in regards to a request from Mr. Robbie Robbins, the superintendent at Gainesville Golf and Country Club. We would appreciate it if you could find the time to make a visitation to Mr. Robbins golf club. There will be another superintendent accompanying you from your area."

I was so intrigued by this letter of invitation from my peers and from the GCSAA that the ringing of my desk phone was ignored until I did not think anyone would be on the other end by the time I picked up the receiver. I finally answered, "Good morning, Willow Lakes Maintenance, may I help you?"

"Don, this is Tom Prescott from Timaquana Country Club. Have you received a letter from our national golf course superintendent's association?"

"Yes, but I am only about halfway through reading it, have you read your letter yet?"

"Yes, and it asks if we can set a time to go over to Robbie's club for a certification visit. Can you make it?"

"I am sure I can, Tom. I will call Robbie and let him know that we can come over and I will call you right back Tom; I think we should go over as soon as possible, don't you? I think we should schedule this visit for Robbie right away."

"Tuesday is a good day for me here at Timaquana. How about you?"

"Tuesday would be fine as far as I am concerned. I will check my calendar and let you know for sure when I call you back. Talk to you later, Tom, and thanks for calling."

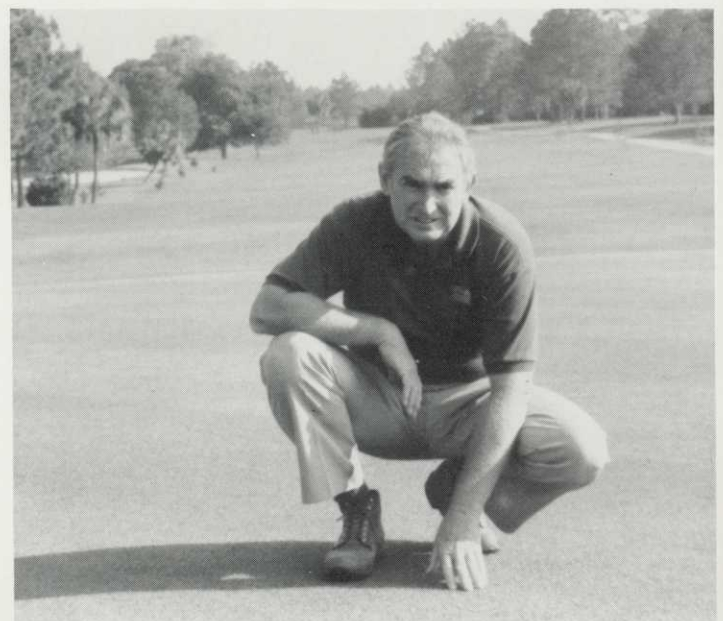
After hanging up I think to myself, it certainly feels good to be involved in helping another professional in my field. I finish reading the GCSAA letter and realize how good it feels to have the opportunity afforded to me to conduct the visitation portion of the certification program. As I start wondering how to start the visitation, the ever present phone rings again. I catch it on the first ring this time, "Willow Lakes Golf Club, may I help you?"

"Don, this is Chris, How are things on the course this morning?"

"Pretty good, Chris. Had a little vandalism last night, the men are taking care of it. Can I help you?"

"We are having a shotgun start this weekend at about 7:15 am. I thought I had better let you know."

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Not only root development, but a true putting surface is one of Robbie's concerns. Robbie told me years ago, "Don, maintain excellent greens."

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"That is great Chris, thanks. Is there anything special that needs to be done?"

"If you could put out our special Willow Lakes flags and have the barbeque grill ready we would appreciate it."

"OK Chris, we will have them ready. Thanks for calling and letting us know about the tournament on Saturday."

As I hung up the phone I wrote down the information the pro shop had just relayed to me for the weekend. 'Communications' I wondered if Robbie has as good a communications system as our staff at Willow Lakes. Before I realize it, I have already started on the visitation at Robbie's course.



Mr. Thurman Lee in his maintenance area — it was apparent to Tom and I that a maintenance schedule is utilized at Gainesville C.C., one of Mr. Lee's tools in his professional maintenance operation.

I decide that the first thing to do in order to set up a professional meeting is to get all parties together. As I was jotting down some steps that should be taken at the course inspection I was contacting the third party via telecommunications to the Gainesville Country Club.

I have known Mr. Robbins for four years. When I came to Florida Robbie had contacted me about joining the North Florida Golf Course Superintendent's Chapter. (He was the President at the time.) As the phone rang I asked myself, should I talk to him as a friend or as a certified golf course superintendent representing the GCSAA?

The ringing stopped, "Gainesville Golf and Country Club"

I had to say something, "Mr. Robbie Robbins please."

"One moment, sir." Phone clicks on desk. This is one of those times when you hope for a hold with FM music.

I begin to feel like I did when I first talked to our association from the secretary and vice president's side of the podium.

"Robbie here, can I help you?"

Be professional I decide, "Mr. Robbins, this is Don Kooyer

from Willow Lakes Golf Club in Jacksonville. I am calling in regards to a Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America visitation to be held at your club. Mr. Robbins, there will be two class A superintendents coming to visit your club, of which I am one."

Contact had been made with all the parties involved and after a few more business telecommunications with each party we had the dates and information provided by the certification committee ready for the visitation. To be able to judge and be judged by your peers can be one of the best emotional highs in ones professional career. As a member of the national Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America I am very proud of having this chance to work with the superintendent from Timaquana Country Club. Tom and I are director and officer respectively in the North Florida Chapter and will represent our association in this endeavor also.

The day of the visitation I had to meet Tom at Timaquana Country Club so Tom and I could commute to Robbie's facility together. When I arrived at Tom's course I could see why Tom's facility was one of the popular clubs in Jacksonville. My course is only a turn around the bend and this was the first visit I had made to Timaquana. As I drove past the clubhouse and down the winding road to the maintenance facility I could tell the grounds were professionally maintained. Everything was trimmed and manicured from the flower beds that surround the stately southern clubhouse to the shrubs that trailed toward the Saint Johns River. The river rolls past the clubhouse heading to the Atlantic. The palms swaying in the breeze seem to be guarded by the hundred year old and older oaks that guided me down the lane. As I pulled into the maintenance area everyone was involved in their duties. Tom invited me into his office and we had coffee. He introduced me to his assistant and we had a short tour of the maintenance facility. At the same time, we talked about some of the things we should bring up at Robbie's course during our visitation later that morning.

When Tom and I arrived at the Gainesville Golf and Country Club we had both looked over the itinerary that the GCSAA had provided for us. Tom would handle certain areas of the interview and I would handle other parts. When Robbie met us at the maintenance area we introduced ourselves as Golf Course Superintendent Association representatives to perform an inspection of his facility for the purpose of his certification in the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America.

I made up my mind that this was a business trip and I was not only representing the GCSAA but also my professional club.

Having been a superintendent for fifteen years and a certified superintendent for slightly less, I have a good feeling for what has to be done at a golf course facility. Robbie made us feel at ease and opened his club for our inspection.

We started at the maintenance facility. All areas were well signed with respect to safety; such as fire extinguishers, gasoline pumping station, pesticide usage area, etc. Floors in all buildings were clean and policed, equipment not being used was stored in proper areas.

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Mechanics area bay was being used but still orderly and clean.

Robbie introduced us to his head mechanic, Mr. Thurman Lee and we asked a few questions about operating procedures and inventory control of parts and materials. As we talked with Thurman I could tell by visually assessing and by his comments, that he was a true professional. Something that we all look for is a team effort and Robbie seems to have established this at his maintenance operations. After spending some more time at his maintenance area and office looking over records and office procedures, we moved out to the links proper.

We spent quite some time looking at the course design, bunkers, turf quality, taking soil samples and checking overseeded turf. We talked of cup changing procedures, golf car traffic control and equipment traffic control areas. We asked Robbie what some of his problem areas were. Was it drainage, irrigation, budgeting or other areas? Remember there is no such thing as a perfect situation. Robbie took us up to the clubhouse area, beautiful flower beds surround the clubhouse with acres of natural wildlife habitat in the background of the pool and veranda. Mr. Robbins introduced us to his greens chairman and to the club manager and other personnel of the clubhouse.

We toured the entire clubhouse facility and needless to say, we were treated graciously. The entire club is run in a very professional manner. All the members should be very proud of all their staff.

Good luck to Mr. Robbins and his continuing endeavor as a professional golf course superintendent. Our North Florida Superintendent's Association is very fortunate to have such a man as Robbie in our organization, and The Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America will gain a true asset as Mr. Robbins becomes one of our certified superintendents. This visitation is just one step in the certification process and I am proud to have been a part of this educational process.

As we all know, our national association was honored this year for excellence in the educational field. We owe our Educational Committee a great vote of confidence for their work in the field of education and the continuing standards of education. Our association is strong in this field and others because we (the superintendents) continue to stand strong and united in our association's future.

If any of my colleagues are in the Gainesville, Florida area be sure and stop in to see a truly professional golf course operation and enjoy the links at Gainesville Golf and Country Club.

I hope this article brings out some of the points in the certification process which will help to keep our profession strong. The knowledge we gain we must give through continuing education and professional involvement. ■



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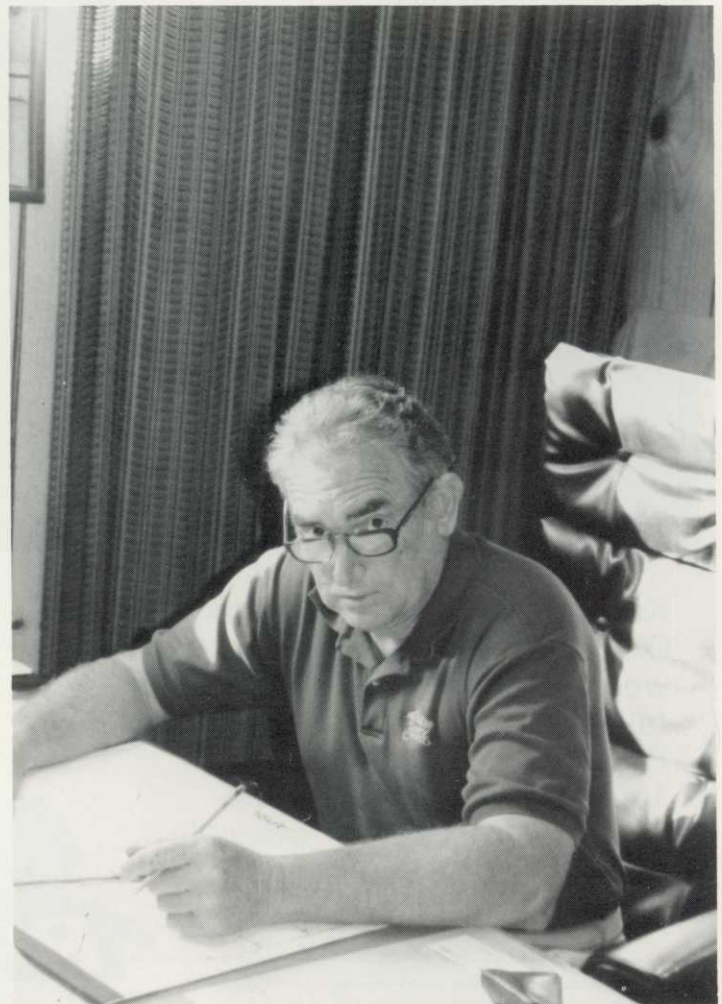
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Robbie Robbins again — more time spent at the office.