

BACK to the FUTURE

Perhaps it's time to look back across the Pond, where superintendents have been nurturing the game of golf for centuries. Maybe they have been ahead of the game all along while we have been digging our own graves.

Can you remember watching the British Open on television this year? Can you remember how brown the golf course appeared?

I remember asking my green committee chairman the next day what he thought about the conditions and he quickly responded, "Deplorable!"

That adjective sounds a little harsh, but let's face it: courses in America are commonly wall-to-wall green and kept in impeccable condition.

Perhaps a little too impeccable.

Maybe our Scottish forefathers are ahead of the game, while we are out there digging our own graves. Just how long can we continue to overproduce?

Let's be honest. American golf courses are maintained too well and everyone's at fault. We as superintendents strive to make our golf courses better every year. When will we reach our limit? What about American golfers? Are they getting spoiled? We hear them complain about those things we do for our own good like aerifying, top dressing, verticutting and so on.

Those Scotsmen do far less and are far better off. And I mean no disrespect: they've got this business figured out far better than we do.

Many American golfers travel from place to place, playing each golf course at its peak level of maintenance. Our members travel from north to south, expecting perfection at each stop along the way. Member-guest tournaments compound the problem.

If the course down the road has something special, you can sure bet that your members will have you doing the same thing in the very near future.

And what about touring pros?

Is there such a thing as a silver spoon? Is the American touring pro spoiled? We hear of foreign pros playing more competitively because they are more familiar with normal world conditions. Again, are we spoiling our pros with fast greens, tight fairways and so on.

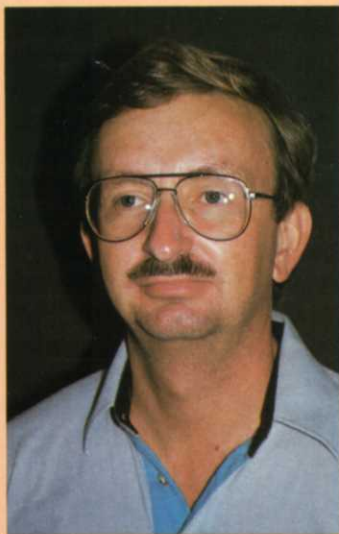
It's got so bad that now we hear TV commentators discussing "roll of the *fairways!*"

Where is it going to end? Even the commentators are spoiled. Sure, they give us a lot of respect and credit when they compliment the golf courses, but the point is, they are calling attention to the very best-conditioned courses in the world.

Is this whole golf business heading in the right direction? Have you ever really thought about what golf will be like in the year 2010? I'm not talking about laser golf with high-tech clubs; I'm talking about the green stuff we play on. We dream of drought-tolerant, heat-resistant, special grasses that we haven't even seen yet. In reality, things might be completely different from what we now envision.

First, let's assume money always will be available to support the top-level clubs. Twenty years from now, money might not even be an issue anywhere.

Instead, the issues might be water



Mike Bailey
Golf Course Superintendent
The Falls CC
Lake Worth



availability and banned chemicals. Golfers may have to adapt to brown, dry turf, weeds, and insect damage.

In 20 years, we might be irrigating greens and tees just three times a week and fairways only once a week. Perhaps by then man will have consumed or polluted so much of his fresh water sources that the precious remainder will not be available for golf courses at any price.

Lush, wall-to-wall green may be a

distant memory.

You've heard of organic gardening. What would it be like to manage a golf course the organic way? That's right; no pesticides of any sort! Environmentalists and government regulations will have virtually eliminated all the current pesticides except those which are so safe as to be ineffective.

If for no reason other than political reality, the current restricted pesticides that combat nematodes and

mole crickets will be long gone and these insect pests will abound in numbers we have not yet seen. (The Rules of Golf may even permit a golfer to knock down mole cricket mounds in his line.)

And as for weeds, they will be prevalent everywhere. The current herbicides on the market will be long gone. We could contemplate pulling weeds by hand, but labor costs make clean golf courses prohibitively expensive. It will be easier just to let the weeds grow because, after all, everybody will have them.

As a matter of fact, we might even play winter rules and roll the ball onto a clump of weeds because at least they offer a better lie than sand.

What about these new so-called low-maintenance golf courses that architects currently are creating with abrupt mounds, huge bunkers, and excessive fields of love grass? Somebody out there is going to get rich modifying all these modern monuments to the way they should have been constructed in the first place.

On the other hand, maybe we can prepare for the future now, since the change is inevitable and superintendents will be virtually powerless in its wake. Pesticides will be banned no matter how many lobbyists we employ. Golfers are going to have to accept that fact.

Those Scottish chaps have not nurtured the game of golf for centuries by accident. They have something to teach us. Perhaps the way back to the future lies on the other side of the Big Pond.



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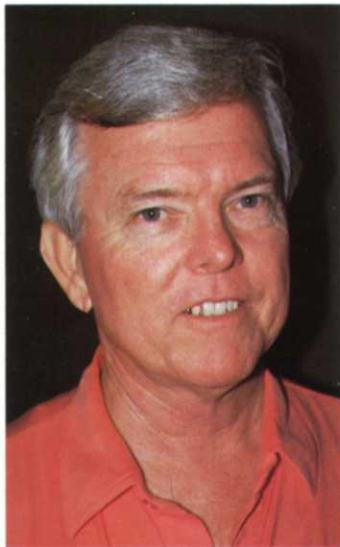
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REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

Editing the chapter magazine gives a superintendent something to do in his spare time



Dan Jones

Dan Jones, CGCS
Editor
The Florida Green

Tom Mascaro and I sat at the table in his office, deciding how to fill up the 16 pages of *The South Florida Green*. Tom said we would use a two-column format with 62-pica columns and 6-point letters with 36-point titles. It all sounded Greek to me. Then Tom asked me if I would consider being the editor.

Wow! Me?

Ignorance is bliss. It was December 1975.

The telephone rings. It is 8 p.m., Sunday evening, Dec. 3, 1989, and Larry Kieffer wants to know if we should hold *The Florida Green* to 86 pages or increase it to 94. We have received 47.5 pages of advertising for the Winter issue, and our policy is 50 percent editorial and 50 percent advertising.

On Monday evening, I call Daniel Zelazek at work (he works the night shift at Pratt Whitney Aircraft) to inform him that we are ready to take the cover picture of our golf team in Orlando.

"Didn't I tell you my wife is having a baby any day now and I can't go anywhere?" says Daniel.

I assure him he forgot to tell me as my heart flutters. I hurriedly call Larry and inform him of the situation.

"You'll have to find a photographer in Orlando," I say.

Tuesday, Irene calls Ralph Baxter at Hector Turf and tells him we will need Cheshire labels for the mailing house used by our new printer. Ralph says he has never heard of Cheshire labels and will have to talk to his computer department.

Wednesday, our largest advertising client calls three days after our ad deadline and wants to run an additional two-page ad. We reluctantly accept the ad.

We call Larry, who says he has just spent three hours on the flow chart (the diagram that shows where each ad and story will go) and is almost halfway finished. We tell him about the ad and he mutters something about deadlines.

Thursday, Dick Long — our printer for 12 years — calls and says he needs some money. (Sixty days after printing the Fall issue, our bill is only half paid.) I quickly look in the checkbook, but I already know what I will see. Too many receivables. I tell him I will bring it to him the following week. All the way to South Miami!

Larry calls back and says that his cover photographer has backed out. I tell him to keep looking.

Yes, Tom, I will accept the editorship. It will be exciting and give me something to do in my spare time. Now if I can get Max Brown to write a quarterly column. And maybe Irene to type the articles. I can probably get Harry McCartha to do the...