

Real superintendents don't wear earrings

One summer morning a few years ago, a young employee — a college student — came to work with a gold earring dangling from one ear.

David Noltner took one look at him and calmly offered this: "Jeff, I'm going over to my tool box, get a pair of big pliers and walk back. If you don't have that jewelry out of your ear when I get back, I'm going to yank it out with those pliers."

The kid never moved on the golf course as fast as he did removing his earring. He was lucky Dave wasn't offering a haircut; his long blond locks needed trimming. I was relating the story that night to my family. They didn't find it as humorous as I did. In fact, daughter Holly said, "I know, Dad. REAL superintendents don't wear earrings."

Some of Holly's friends do, though. The boys, I mean.

So, with thanks to Holly and apologies to the originator of "real men don't eat quiche," here's my REAL list for golf course superintendents.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents don't wear earrings. Their employees don't wear them either. And they certainly don't wear gold necklaces.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents wear work boots to the golf course. Not boat mocs and for sure not tennis shoes.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent never wears \$75 slacks, especially to work.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent owns at least ten pairs of blue jeans. He also still wears a belt, not as a fashion (mis)statement, but to keep his pants up. He doesn't believe wrinkles are "in vogue" either.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents discard a shirt or pair of pants when it's worn out, not when it's out of fashion.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent doesn't wear cologne to work; he would rather smell like the shop than a house of ill repute.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent is never mistaken for the club's golf pro. Even less likely is being mistaken for the clubhouse manager.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents will always list green as their favorite color. When you're from Wisconsin, red may tie green for first.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent always considers a "Made in America" tag as an important criterion in purchase decisions.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents never drive those little pickups made by Nissan or Toyota or Isuzu. They drive either Fords or Chevys (1/2 ton or larger). Occasionally you'll see a real superintendent in a Dodge truck, indicating one of his members owns a Dodge dealership.

- ◆ When it comes to cars, you won't see a real golf course superintendent (from Wisconsin, at least) driving a Saab, Peugeot, Volvo, Audi, Fiat or BMW. He doesn't drive Japanese or Korean cars, either.

- ◆ And speaking of vehicles, real golf course superintendents, at least those from Wisconsin, use real turf trucksters on their golf courses. They wouldn't have those little white imports with the skinny tires and no traction. We don't care how popular they are in California. In fact, that is reason enough NOT to run them!

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent never "does lunch" nor participates in "power lunches". Lunch time was meant for eating. In fact, real superintendents have lunch at mid-morning and eat dinner at noon. The evening meal is called "supper."

- ◆ A real Wisconsin golf course superintendent drinks real beer, not lite beer, not wine and for sure not ice cream drinks. Real cheese is his favorite

- ◆ snack. He drinks milk at every meal and feels unsatisfied if he hasn't had beef for either dinner or supper. Really.

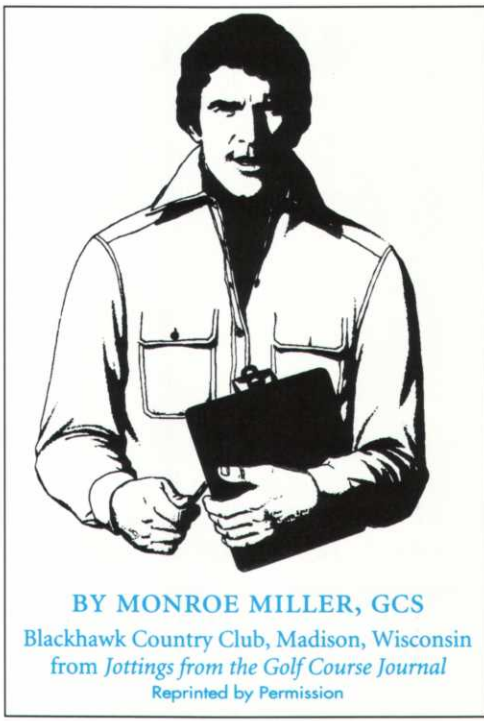
- ◆ A real golf course superintendent decides on how long to run his irrigation system himself and never leaves that duty to a "weather station".

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent decides on the radio stations allowed play time in his shop. No station featuring music by Jeb and the Haystacks is permitted. Neither is one playing tunes by Dougie and the Druggies.

A real superintendent listens to light rock or the music of your life.

- ◆ Real golf course superintendents don't fertilize their lawns more than once a year. They simply do not need the extra work. When mowing is required, each does his own. No riding mowers and no self-propelled mowers allowed.

- ◆ A real golf course superintendent doesn't fib about 1) how much nitrogen



BY MONROE MILLER, GCS
Blackhawk Country Club, Madison, Wisconsin
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he applies on his putting greens each year 2) the stimpmeter readings for his putting greens, 3) the height of cut of his greens and fairways, 4) how much *poa annua* he really has, and 5) his salary. His ego isn't tied to any of the above.

◆ A real golf course superintendent doesn't like flowers on his golf course. He'd rather use the time and money spent on pansies and petunias for trees. They're a real man's plants. Flowers are reserved for clubhouse landscapes.

◆ Given his druthers, a real golf course superintendent would do away with all tee and green equipment — the furniture, the signage, ball washers, rakes, club cleaners, score card boxes, water coolers, etc. "Give them a flag stick to shoot at and let 'em play," says the real golf course superintendent. Many golfers feel the same way.

◆ A real golf course superintendent greatly prefers reel mowers to rotaries.

He understands the difference between cutting and mowing. He likes cutting better. He knows that rotary mowers are hackers to be used only when the ground

isn't suited for reel (real!) cutters. Rotaries finish a distant second to reels.

◆ A real golf course superintendent realizes that *poa annua* is one of the best golf turfs growing; he is perfectly capable of maintaining it in a superb playing condition.

◆ Real golf course superintendents are morning people, and they greatly prefer dawn to sunset. They subscribe to Ben Franklin's creed — early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise. Except for the "wealthy" part.

◆ A real golf course superintendent doesn't jog. After 10-12 hours of work each day on the golf course, he doesn't have to. He likely wouldn't have the energy and absolutely wouldn't be seen in a cute, tight little jogging suit.

Before anyone gets his nose bent out of shape, let me confess I don't meet all the qualifications and criteria of a real golf course superintendent, either. I only own six pairs of blue jeans and proudly maintain flower beds on the golf course.

But make no mistake: this golf course superintendent doesn't wear earrings. ♪

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