

A Day in the Life...

What superintendents and their crews do from dawn to dusk to dawn



*Quarry wall cleaning is a unique maintenance task at the Black Diamond Ranch.
Photo by Laurie Frutchey.*

Editor's Note: *There is no such thing as a typical workday in the life of a golf course superintendent because there are no typical golf courses. That's part of the appeal of the game we serve. Every superintendent has thousands of stories to tell. On the following pages, we present a handful which, taken together, indicate the broad range of problems we deal with and the unique solutions crafted by the members of our profession.*

From Darkaphobia to Dilithium Crystals

BY MIKE MONGOVEN, CGCS
Fort Myers Country Club

The day in the life of a "dirt farmer," as my wife sometimes affectionately calls me, starts early. Early is a relative term!

The hour most golf course superintendents get cracking is extremely early for your average Joe. John Wayne would be proud of us, because you won't catch many golf course superintendents "burning daylight" as the Duke would say.

One of the biggest challenges we face immediately upon arrival to work is the lack of sunlight. This presents multiple problems which include hiring a staff

that is not overloaded with members that suffer from "darkaphobia," the fear of getting to work too early.

Leadership and experience are critical in managing a staff in the dark. This is a skill that most golf course superintendents will profess to have. In fact, some golf course superintendents will tell you that they are often kept in the dark.

The sunrise is always a beautiful sight. It can also be a bit painful on a Saturday morning after a few too many red pops on Friday night.

The sky lit up in pink, purple, red, blue, peach and whatever is nice. Starting in such a way can put a positive spin on the entire day.

I enjoy seeing the world wake up.

As I look at the day ahead, I generally try to "ride that wave" as they say down under. I occasionally bring my children to work with me on weekends so they can experience the awesomeness of the morning.

As the general population starts to scurry about, the day of a golf course superintendent becomes more difficult. More people means more communication.

This can be difficult and requires much patience, which should not be confused with becoming a patient or making someone else a patient.

Some golfers, and dare I say, some golf professionals can be difficult to deal with from time to time. The community of golf course superintendents tends to be friendly and helpful.

Need help diagnosing a problem? Want advice on equipment? Do you just want someone to listen? There is always a superintendent friend to help during the day.

Wearing many hats is a requirement for a golf course superintendent to have a successful day. Training as a priest, rabbi, motivational speaker, drill sergeant, adult diaper changer, fireman, physician, counselor, mind reader, CPA, agronomist, coach, referee, hydrologist, horticulturist, meteorologist, herbiculturist, mole cricketologist and faith healer are all helpful in the pursuit of excellence.

Stacking all these hats on one's head and showing the talent and skill of the Cat in the Hat to wear them is something that is not taught at The University of Turf. Hopefully, after a few tries and relocations, you will have mastered it.

After a few hours — generally less than 15 — most of us can call it a day. A few hours sleep and it is off to save our piece of the planet for another day. If Scotty could just recharge those dilithium crystals a little quicker, I am sure we could cover more bases tomorrow. 🦉

Every Day is Special

BY LAURIE FRUTCHEY

*Golf Course Superintendent
Black Diamond Ranch*

AS TOLD TO LISA A. SWING

*Horticulturist
Black Diamond Ranch*

Black Diamond Ranch is a privately owned 27 hole golf course (soon to be 36 holes) located in Lecanto. It is owned and operated by Stan Olsen. We have the distinction of being ranked number one in Florida by *Florida Golfer* magazine and as high as number four in the United States.

On any given day, you will see me or any of my supervisors out working along with the rest of the crew. It may be manual labor or the intricacies of teaching proper operation of equipment. I believe a working boss is a respected, knowledgeable boss.

Our normal working routine starts at 6 a.m. Monday morning. At this time, my

assistant superintendents (or myself) arrive to write up a daily work schedule.

We have our "original" Quarry Course, which is built around an abandoned limestone quarry. George Moorehead, one of my assistants, handles the scheduling for these 18 holes.

The Ranch Course is currently a 9-hole layout with a natural woodland setting. An additional nine holes are under construction. Maintenance schedules on the Ranch Course are handled by Kirk Osborn, also an assistant superintendent.

Our crew, consisting of 43 full-time employees, is at work between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. They get their assignments or do their own jobs starting at 6:30 a.m.

Morning jobs are listed for golf course maintenance staff. Nineteen employees, plus myself and two assistants, are responsible for the morning jobs.

They prepare their tools and equipment according to their assignments. These jobs consist of cutting cups, mowing greens (either walk mow or triplex), filling water coolers, emptying trash buckets, raking sand traps, moving tee mark-

ers, etc.

Morning jobs are finished within two to three hours. During this time, we note other jobs to be completed and schedule appropriate employees to each task.

Quarry wall cleanup is one job we have here that most courses don't have to contend with. Holes 13 through 17 are constructed around the natural aquifer lake that is the core feature of the back nine. Quarry walls some 60 feet high create a stunning backdrop of natural and manmade beauty. Certain areas of these walls (only where it's safe!) are string-trimmed and brush-bladed down to give a better vision of the boulders and trees that line them.

Spring and fall are the heaviest growth periods so this is a job done on a regular basis during those seasons.

Our crew breaks for lunch at 11:30 a.m. We take a half hour lunch and resume working at noon. We then work until 3 p.m. This is the regular schedule for Monday through Thursday.

On Fridays, the crew leaves at 11:30 a.m. for the day. The crew is split in half

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for weekends. They work a half day on Saturday and Sunday every other weekend so that their time equals 40 hours per week. They start at the same time as weekdays and do the morning jobs and leave by 9:30 a.m. weather permitting.

Other divisions of the maintenance program include a golf course/landscape horticulturist, Lisa Swing, and landscape supervisor, Jim Jarrett.

Horticultural aspects include planting and maintaining all annuals in the complex and other sites located on various properties nearby. A crew of three is included in this division.

Landscape pertains to all common ground areas, entrances, sales office, model homes and pro shop and lounge areas of the clubhouse. A crew of nine represents the landscape segment.

We have three full-time mechanics led by the head mechanic, Don Hespeler. This crew is responsible for conducting daily preventative maintenance on the equipment and trouble shooting and solving equipment failures in the field.

Crew meetings are held "as needed," usually every two to three months. This helps to keep all employees informed on company policies, staff changes, extracurricular activities, safety guidelines, etc.

It is also an opportunity for group questions and answers, complaints and frequent thank you's for jobs well done. Our supervisors meet at least once a month to cover any changes, share information and discuss morale builders or other related matters.

Course inspection is done daily. My

assistants, supervisors and I keep up on what has been done and needs to be done so that it can reflect on our scheduling for assignments. Woody Wilson, who is our spray technician, uses his eyes to spot any weed, insect and disease trouble on the course. Handled properly and efficiently, these "problems" are not quite the headache they could be.

We're in constant communications with pro shop personnel, as well as each other, via radio communications. Sprinkler heads running or a missing flag pole can sometimes be noticed quicker by a golfer and reported. Information obtained from the pro shop (tee times, last golfer, etc.) is valuable to us during our watering, overseeding or spraying.

Special events for Black Diamond include several major member and member-guest tournaments. We also host the Big League Challenge-Dodge Shootout and the Ted Williams Celebrity Tournament.

Events like these give our crew a chance to shine. Black Diamond is a gem among many and for most, to see it for the first time is breathtaking. It is always nice to hear compliments on the hard work we've done all year long. Even though we're proud of outside compliments, our members' opinions are of the utmost importance.

Each one sees the course on a regular basis and it's their opinions that have the most impact. But for the members who see it every day, to give compliments, is very special.

Therefore, special events are treated

as a usual day. Major differences are pulling in everyone from all divisions to get the golf course ready to play for earlier tee times and shotgun starts.

We hand rake traps that are usually done with the sand pro. We double walk mow greens to give them a nicer appearance and a smoother faster roll of the ball. All areas are checked and double checked so we know the course is in the best possible shape.

Sometimes it can get very hectic if a problem arises with a walk mower, so we keep a mechanic out on the course with a radio if he is needed for a quick repair. Backups are ready in the shop if a breakdown requires a major repair.

All in all, things run smoothly and it's nice to know your job is done for the day and we can turn the course over to the pro shop personnel.

Paperwork is an everyday tribulation. Our very able secretary, Margaret Sterbenc, has all paper work laid out on appropriate desks to be reviewed and signed. Reports and budgets are usually done in the office and at home.

Quiet time is the best time to dive in and accomplish mental tasks without interruption. Budgets are due on a monthly and yearly basis.

Continuing education has proven invaluable for me and my staff. From the mechanics to the landscapers, we feel that updated information and the latest technologies are very beneficial to us in our rapidly changing industry.

Time permitting, we try to attend all the special functions we can to enhance

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our skills and to gain knowledge. My assistants and I split time on association and chapter meetings. When I'm away from the course, I do call in to ease my mind to know that there were no major problems.

Mr. Olsen and our general manager, Jim Carman, encourage and support our staff to attend meetings and seminars. Positive influences are a great attribute to our careers here at Black Diamond.

On a negative subject, my worst nightmare was not on the golf course but on a more personal level. It came in the form of unflattering and derogatory remarks made by an unknown person.

As a new superintendent, I was anxious to prove my knowledge and professionalism. An attack on my character was not a good start for a boost of confidence. Terry Lagree, our general manager at the time, saw how this negativity affected me and he made sure we talked in depth until my uneasy feelings were resolved.

On that day, Terry helped me to un-

derstand that what is most important is how well I do my job by my own standards and not let jealousy or hatred affect my attitude. Since that day, I've not looked back.

That situation has given me more courage in situations to deal more fairly and open minded with all types of people. So my actual nightmare turned out to be a blessing. Not only did it give me the utmost confidence in myself but it showed me the faith and support that my bosses had in me. That type of loyalty and confidence is important in any type of business.

I feel stretched thin at times with so many demands on me and my time. Golf courses as beautiful as this one help to alleviate the stress. All it takes is time to reflect.

One long ride on a nice day, fresh air and sunshine in my face and wonderment that I can say, "I help to make all of this the way it is!"

That's reward enough.

It's a Jungle Out There

BY JOHN KOPAK
Golf Course Superintendent
Alaqua C.C.

When I arrive at work at approximately 6:30 a.m., one of the first things I do is check the phone messages. A common message may be a salesperson wanting to get together and talk about their products or an employee whose pet cat turned his or her alarm clock off by accident and they'll be running a little late.

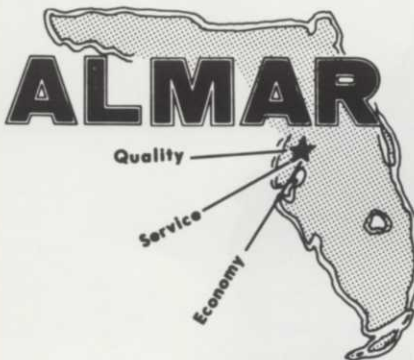
But here at Alaqua, a common message might be,

- "John, it's Chef Robert. Could you get the raccoons out of my dumpster?" or
- "John, this is Mrs. Smith. Could you please get the alligator out of my backyard? It's chasing my poodle" or
- "John, this is William at the guard

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house. I've gotten several calls about the wild pigs running down the boulevard and stopping traffic."

What???

That's right, folks. It's a jungle out there and you can add "game warden" to the list of responsibilities I hold.

The pig escapade is one of the latest of our wildlife adventures. Although I found the pigs to be most interesting creatures, they also were causing some serious damage by rooting up areas with their destructive little snouts.

After enticing them into an area with some corn and apple pie from the chef at the clubhouse, I was able to capture them and give them to a friend who raises hogs.

Explaining to Mrs. Smith that her Indian hawthorne shrubs and those pansies in her landscape are a delectable treat for the deer, and that's why she has no foliage or flowers left in front of her house, is not uncommon at all.

Nor is telling the foursome on the tenth hole that those birds in the fairway aren't buzzards, but actually wild turkeys making their way around the back nine.

One of my fondest sightings was when an eagle was sitting in a tree watching an osprey fish over a nearby pond. When the osprey caught a fish, the eagle tried to take it away in mid-air.

The osprey's mate came to the aid of his partner and kept the eagle busy while the bird with the fish made a getaway. Later on while talking to some Audubon people, I came to find out that eagles often let the other birds of prey do their work for them.

Coexisting with all of these wonderful creatures is not a burden in any way. It is truly a blessing, and everyone who has the privilege of seeing such wonders should feel fortunate.

I've learned a lot about nature while working on the golf course. I know I'll never get tired of seeing animals and birds, too numerous to name, in this great habitat that we share.



A Day in the Life of

BY JOE ONDO, CGCS

Winter Pines G.C.

Webster's definition of normal is "usual, ordinary, or typical, or the expected or usual condition." I think most superintendents, as they are driving to work, are expecting a normal day's routine, but as we all know sometimes that is not the case.

Our usual daily start and ending times are 6:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. but that changes during the longer days and other cultural practices.

Being a public golf course, the first group will usually follow the greensmower and cup setter around unless told to wait. My usual routine is to ride the course first thing to look for anything out of the ordinary, check progress on things being done, or create a list of jobs for future work.

Having a small crew, some days I will change cups, spray (spot or boom) or do the work of an employee who is sick or on vacation.

Until about four years ago I used to do all the grinding of reels and bedknives and some mechanical work. At that time my mechanic was part-time inside and part outside when needed. When he retired and went part time, we hired a full-time mechanic to take care of everything.

Having worked on equipment in the winter in Pennsylvania it came in handy for me here, but I'm glad that's done now that we have a full-time person.

The daily work schedule is posted on the bulletin board for the next day with any special instructions. We do not have many crew meetings since I am able to work with and communicate one-on-one with all my employees. After the morning schedule, special instructions are given for a certain job to be done, if need be, or a note on the board.

We try to schedule any major renovation a few days after any special men's or ladies' association tournaments. Being public, our schedule is pretty flexible and usually nine holes are open so

we can work on the other and have it back in play as soon as possible.

If bad weather is predicted, the pro shop will usually need two days advance notice to schedule tee times or we will wait another week to do our work.

I usually go over prices and verification of items purchased at least once a week with the owner, who is also the manager. We also discuss anything he would like to see done or future projects I have in mind for the course.

We have been rebuilding number one green for a year to convert the contaminated 328 to Tifdwarf. We have rebuilt six greens on the course and one putting green, with one on the course and one putting green left to do.

I attend as many monthly chapter meetings as I can, and pick and choose seminars so I can keep my CEUs up to date for recertification.

I am fortunate in that three of my six employees have been here over 17 years, so when I'm gone things usually don't miss a beat.

When I attend a conference or am on vacation, each employee has a list of job assignments to do and an alternate list if

I am fortunate in that three of my six employees have been here over 17 years, so when I'm gone things usually don't miss a beat.

bad weather or an equipment problem occurs. Everyone is pretty careful because they know if something breaks, it is usually flymo work or hand labor of some sort as their next job.

I play in as many amateur golf tournaments as my schedule and money allow. Most are on weekends but sometimes one will be during the week, so I have to watch how much I am gone from work.

We have had our share of irrigation blowouts, sprinklers that run all night when and where you least need it, hydraulic leaks and other incidents that give you a little more gray hair — or no

hair at all. There have been some days more stressful than others but no really bad nightmare days so far.

Winter Pines is unique in that we do most projects in-house. They include the rebuilding of greens, levelling and enlarging twelve tee tops, installing eleven holes with automatic irrigation, replacing blacktop cartpaths with over 6,000 feet of concrete paths, and adding on to the maintenance building and extending the parking lot by pouring 250 yards of concrete.

All of these projects were completed while still maintaining the golf course for play. With our weather sometimes these projects take longer than planned, but in the long run all have made Winter Pines a little better. People can see the improvements over the years.

As you can see, some days are more challenging than others, but I enjoy this line of work and the different problems each day brings.

You want to go where?

BY MICHAEL J. PERHAM, CGCS
*Director of Golf Course Maintenance
The Fountains Country Club*

These were the exact words my wife Marcy said to me when I told her the job at The Fountains Country Club in Lake Worth had come open in February of 1995, and I was considering applying for it.

If chosen for the job, it meant relocating our family back to Palm Beach County, which we had left in 1984 to move to Vero Beach and employment at The Moorings Club.

Professionally for me, it was the most dramatic change I had ever contemplated undertaking. It meant leaving the confines of a 75-acre golf course with a staff of 12 and a property that I truly loved,

and taking on the challenge of 54 sprawling holes and a staff of 53.

About the Fountains:

The Fountains is an 825-acre gated community, with approximately 1400 residential units. There are three 18-hole championship golf courses designed by Von Hagge and Devlin.

The golf courses were built in several phases. Twenty-seven holes were built in the late 60s, 18 more holes were added in 1975, and an additional nine holes were integrated into the 18 built in 1975, with the completion of all construction occurring in 1981.

These comprise what are now the North, West, and South Golf Courses.

The community is bordered on three sides by major roads, and split by a large drainage canal belonging to the Lake Worth Drainage District. The membership at The Fountains is served out of two clubhouses.

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Golf Course Maintenance Operation

I am responsible for the maintenance of the three golf courses, and all landscaping at the two clubhouses. Our Green and Grounds Department employs a staff of 53, and works out of two maintenance buildings 1.6 miles apart on our internal road system.

The L-14 Canal which splits our property, also divides the Golf Courses into 27 holes on each side of the canal. Due to the logistics involved with travel, and lost time; we treat the canal as the dividing line.

Very seldom does the maintenance staff from one side of the canal venture across the other side.

This occurs only during special tournament preparation, or summer renovation work. This allows each side of the canal to receive the attention that is required to provide the membership the end product they desire.

Management staff

During the interview process, I had expressed my opinion on what level of staffing reporting to me I felt was adequate to meet the demands of such a large operation. Prior to accepting the position, I was assured by the club management that we would staff the operation accordingly.

Our management structure consists of two golf course superintendents, two assistant golf course superintendents, an equipment manager, a landscape foreman, and an administrative assistant.

Each superintendent and his assistant are responsible for twenty seven holes, with each set working out of one of the maintenance complexes. The equipment manager is responsible for all shop operations that occur in both maintenance complexes. The landscape foreman oversees the landscape maintenance operations at the two clubhouses, and renders assistance when called upon by the golf

courses.

Most importantly, the administrative assistant tries to keep all this organized, all the while having to put up with me. Which my wife says isn't easy, but that's another story.

I rely heavily on these seven individuals to perform at a very high level of proficiency in order for our operation to function efficiently. The constraints on my time dictate that I not become involved in the day-to-day operation of the golf courses.

These individuals hire, train, supervise, promote, and if necessary terminate their staffs. This instills a level of respect for their immediate supervisors by their staff members. Our entire department knows anyone can knock on my door at any time, but only after they have spoken to their immediate supervisor about the problem.

Is any day normal?

I generally arrive on the property each morning between 6:30 and 6:45 a.m.

My route into work from home takes me by our South Maintenance Complex first. I usually stop to talk with Aki Polvikoski, our South 27 Golf Course superintendent. (At the time this article was written, the South 27 assistant superintendent position was not staffed.)

After talking with Aki to see if he has any problems, I then drive to the North Maintenance Complex where my office is located.

Once at the North Complex, I go into my office, check to see what messages I may have received from yesterday, and spend a few minutes with our administrative assistant, Mary Lips.

We converse to catch up on what has transpired since we last saw each other yesterday, and what is on the schedule for today. It is now roughly 7:15 a.m., and its time to hit the golf courses.

This is the most peaceful time of the day, and also the most important; because many days this is the only opportunity I have to see the golf courses.

I generally speak to the North 27 superintendent, Pasi Pussinen, and the assistant superintendent, Glen Terranova somewhere on the North 27 holes.



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My routing of the morning tour is ever so important. It is impossible to see all 54 holes during my morning tour. I try to alternate my travel route as much as possible, attempting to see different parts of 36 holes each morning.

If we are involved in projects or construction, these often dictate my morning travel plans, and decrease the opportunity to see other parts of the golf courses.

Unfortunately, by 9a.m. I am back in the office. Administrative matters associated with our operation are next on the agenda. Preparation for meetings and following up on prior assignments generally consume the remainder of the morning.

A visit to our accounting office where our controller, human resources director, and other office support personnel are located may be called for. Mary Lips visits this office twice daily, so unless I am required for a specific purpose, I may visit this office only one day per week.

Lunch time arrives with an opportunity to visit with our director of golf, Mike Nedrow, and our general manager, Douglas A. Barrett. I generally have lunch with Mike three to four days a week, and Mr. Barrett will join us two to three times a month.

Often lunch is an opportunity to con-

duct business with club officials or business associates. Several times a month I may be asked to join the club president, green committee chairmen or other special committee members during lunch to discuss ongoing or upcoming projects at the club.

The afternoon arrives with the hope of sneaking out on the golf courses to see whatever I missed in the morning. This may be a real quick whirlwind tour, with often one specific stop in mind.

Interspersed into this routine is a stop to talk with Moe Rodriquez, our landscape foreman at one of the clubhouses. I generally talk with our equipment manager, Rick Parsons, somewhere at the North Shop. Most days, this opportunity does not avail itself.

Then it is back to the office for more administrative duties or preparation for a meeting. Most days conclude sometime between 4p.m. and 5p.m. in the afternoon.

Meetings and planning

To give you some idea of the volume of meetings and planning that consumes the majority of my day, here is a brief sketch on what was occurring at the Fountains in the month of January when this article was written:

Meetings

- * Golf Course Management Staff - Two to three times a month, we meet in my office to discuss upcoming events and maintenance work. We also review our department's monthly financial statement at this time.
- * Green and Grounds Committee
- * Golf Committee
- * Club Department Heads
- * Irrigation Committee - Three meetings in January.
- * Membership Informational Meeting - At which a proposal to replace the South 27 Irrigation System was presented by myself, in conjunction with John Foy of the USGA Green Sec-

tion, and Hal Kilpatrick, our irrigation designer and consultant.

- * Coffee Talk - Five, one hour long conversations with the members at their morning coffee, to answer questions regarding the South 27 Irrigation System replacement.

Planning

* North 27 Holes Irrigation System - This project includes installation of a Maxi Control Package, with associated electric wire, re-tubing all sprinkler heads, replacement of swing joints, and installation of a dual head system around the greens. Also required procuring services of a road-boring contractor to bore sleeves underneath six roadways. This project commenced installation in February.

* Fountains Condominium Operations - Coordinate with our Property Owners Association concerning their improvements that will conflict with our installation of new irrigation control package on North 27 Holes.

* USGA Greens - Conversations with our golf course architect, Jeff Myers, John Foy of the USGA and a golf course contractor regarding a method to repair USGA-spec greens that were improperly constructed at the Club.

* Property Encroachment - Educate golf course architect regarding golf course improvements that are not located on club property. Architect to develop cost estimates to relocate improvements should they be required to be relocated in conjunction with a road-widening project on our southwestern boundary.

* Road Widening - Interface with Palm Beach County officials and the contractors concerning road widening project on our southwestern boundary. Preliminary planning for security fence relocation and vegetative buffer replacement along a 1.2-mile stretch of our property line.

Property Line Survey and Fence Replacement - Procure services of surveyor to ascertain property line along a stretch of canal that separates The Fountains from Lucerne Lakes, a golf course community to our west. Coordinate with Fountains Condominium officials regarding the replacement of the security fence.



Remember! You wanted to do this!

The first six months on the job, I must have said this phrase to myself five times a day. I would be lying if I didn't admit that I questioned my decision several times. The transition to an administrator versus a hands-on golf course superintendent was very difficult. Now, two years have almost passed and I look forward to going to work every day.

A few thoughts that hopefully will help someone in a similar situation some day:

1. Feel comfortable with the immediate professionals you work with on a daily basis. I would never have accepted this position if I had not felt extremely

comfortable with my relationship with the general manager and director of golf. Research these individuals' backgrounds, just as they are researching yours.

2. Hire good people and hold them accountable. This advice is never more important than in a large operation like this. If someone is not doing their job, and you have to do it, you do not need that individual. Harsh words perhaps, but you must realize this is the only way you will accomplish what you were hired for in the first place.
3. Have fun! It is imperative to maintain a positive mental attitude about your job. Truly enjoy what you do, and take pride in your accomplishments.

“

I would be lying if I didn't admit that I questioned my decision several times. The transition to an administrator versus a hands-on golf course superintendent was very difficult.

Logging a Typical Day

BY STEPHEN M. PEARSON,

CGCS

The Falls Country Club

The Falls C.C., Wednesday, January 22, 1997 - Temperature 54°

6:00 a.m.

My usual routine starts with opening up the main entrance gates and then the maintenance road gate. As I'm opening up the shop and driving equipment out I couldn't help but think about the past few days and how cold it was.

Saturday - 34 with heavy North winds, Sunday - 36 with no wind in the morning and heavy frost through many of the rough areas, Monday - 40 and again frost but lighter.

I know that Tuesday was a lot warmer but the frost damage from Sunday and Monday is unavoidable and its effected straw colored grass is obvious by the afternoon. Tuesday being a Ladies Member-Guest tournament was no time to charcoal greens so I planned on Wednesday morning.

6:30 a.m.

The crew is given their assignments this morning and we are leapfrogging

four walking mowers. (One starts at the practice greens, one at No. 1, one at No. 2 and one at No. 3 with each one going to the next uncut green until all are cut.)

This process allows the greens to get cut in front of the golfers but more importantly in front of my sprayer. I know the mowers won't cut much grass from those purple un-overseeded Tifdwarf bermudagrass greens, but they clean up better than the rollers that we've used the past two days.

Charcoaling greens is such a nasty process. Mixing is the worst part, of course, and very time consuming but you just have to do the best you can.

After spraying a green I like to get about 20 minutes to a half hour before any golfer gets to a green. That allows time for the material to dry on the leaf blade. Our membership has learned over the years the benefits of charcoaling so even when they get some on their shoes or balls they know it will wash off.

7:45 a.m.

I reconfirmed with our starter that our charcoaling is taking place as scheduled. I posted in the pro shop yesterday that this process would occur in the morning and also told my greens chairman and a few of the members that I see on a regular basis.

A little advance PR goes a long way. I also told them that I couldn't let anyone start on the back nine in the morning; otherwise it would be a real problem getting the greens sprayed ahead of them. By this time in the morning I've also fed our 30 pairs of exotic ducks that we've purchased over the past two years.

8:00 a.m.

The starter informs me that a single is going out in front of the others. Mr. H. wants to get in a quick 18 before he catches a plane to New York. That's OK but I know he plays fast and he'll catch my sprayer on the back nine.

Somehow we will work it out.

He understands the process anyway. Also at this time our outside contractor shows up to do our six-month preventive maintenance (PM) work on the pump station. That's no problem because it has been the same man for the past two years.

8:15 a.m.

My spray tech has already finished his first tank. He has mix/loaded his second tank and has continued where he left off. We cover about six to seven greens with one tank.

Using a field jet nozzle to put out a greater volume with the charcoal is the only way we've found to apply this solution without clogging nozzles. Normally

we use Delavan cone nozzles and it takes us two tanks to cover the 4 acres of Tifdwarf bermudagrass. With the fieldjet nozzle it takes us three tanks.

8:50 a.m.

The second tank has been sprayed through No.12 green and the spray tech is back loading up the last tank. Some of the other golfers are now chomping at the bit to tee off the back nine. We are still holding them up. Mr. H. has just made the turn and is playing No. 10. He has to play through.

9:05 a.m.

The spray tech passes 10 tee on the way to finish 12 green. I'm standing at the tee talking to a foursome of walkers about the charcoaling procedure as he passes. Now they can start because it will take them 30 minutes to get to 12 Green. In the meantime Mr. H. is now finishing No. 12.

9:15 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.

We finish 12, jump over to 17 then back to 13, over to 16 and 15 then back to 14 and finish with 18. All in which is done so Mr. H. doesn't play immediately after we spray. He doesn't mind anyway.

9:45 a.m.

I check back in with the pro shop. I check out tomorrow's golf schedule and get more news on Friday's men's tournament.

I also check in with the controller and see if there are any updates on budget meetings. This is the time of the year when our budgets are prepared and various meetings are set up for review. I also swing back out to the pump house to see how our PM work is going. Everything's fine.

10:15 a.m.

Back at the shop. My assistant has gotten the rest of the crew started on their other jobs for the day. I check messages on the answering machine and follow up with returning calls.

By this time of the day everyone knows what they are doing to finish the day.

I get back to scheduling work for tomorrow and let the mechanics know what equipment we intend to use. Weather has such a big part to play in what we will attempt to do tomorrow and in subse-

quent days so I check our satellite information service and the computer screen to see what fronts are coming or if there are any weather changes that may affect our work.

11:30 a.m.

Lunch time for the crew. My lunch time may vary depending on what I may be doing at the time and how long it will take but I like to have lunch around this time, too.

We have a group of us that usually eat around this time at the Grill Room in the clubhouse - the general manager, head golf professional, controller, bookkeeper and our executive secretary.

I may spend up to an hour depending on the conversation and the various discussions that take place about company work, jobs or personnel. Sometimes I may have a casual conversation with a member which helps establish an open avenue for member involvement.

12:30 p.m.

I check back with our Irrigation PM contractor and he has finished. He's ready to repressurize and do the final adjustments. Thirty minutes and we're through. The station is back in perfect condition.

1:00 p.m.

Back at my office I've got some more calls and need to order some liquid fertilizers for next week. I fill out the appropriate Purchase Requisitions and set them aside to be signed later by the greens chairman and general manager.

The mechanics let me know that there is a major problem with one of our hydraulic five-reel units.

We are trying so hard to get this piece to last until May when we can buy or lease a new unit and phase this one out.

It has been costing us an arm and leg to keep running. Cost analysis shows that we have already bought repair parts equaling to one third of the original purchase price into this machine since we purchased it five years ago.

2:00 p.m.

Around this time of day I like to make a run around the golf course to see how the day's activities have gone and how the greens look for tonight's irrigation, if any is done at all.

A few probes with the soil plugger shows the need for a cycle on greens tonight. I stop by the clubhouse again to pick up mail which usually comes in around 1 p.m.. Nothing unusual. The usual amount of junk mail.

As 3 o'clock approaches, the crew is in cleaning off the equipment and I usually spend time with my assistant to talk about tonight's watering and the schedule for tomorrow. Equipment is fueled, greased and prepped for tomorrow if it hasn't been done earlier in the day.

It's after 3 o'clock now and the crew has gone home. I usually spend some time relaxing and just thinking about what other events or schedules are upcoming. In our work with its great diversity and ever-changing variables, you can never do too much planning.

Time out: 4:35 p.m.

Working the Plan

BY PETE METCALF

*Golf Course Superintendent
The Vineyards C. C.*

The Vineyards Country Club is a 36-hole private country club with 750 golfing members. Our maintenance staff is made up of one superintendent, two assistants, one shop manager, one horticulturist and one crew foreman.

A typical day at the Vineyards begins at approximately 5:30 a.m. when the first people to arrive are the salaried employees. Yes, this even includes me, the superintendent.

My rationale for this early start stems from my belief that so often a well-thought-out schedule is doomed simply because weather conditions have changed from one extreme to another... overnight!

Therefore, rather than revising a schedule prepared for course conditions based upon the previous 24 hours, we schedule each morning following a quick check of current course conditions.

Once we have determined whether or not rainfall, temperatures or irrigation malfunctions have created unusual conditions, we go about the task of organizing crew assignments based on play and events previously scheduled by the golf staff.

These early morning course assessments are made before 6 a.m. by one or two members of the management staff while the others are rolling out the equipment and preparing for the arrival of the rest of the crew.

I meet with my staff in my office at 6 a.m. to go over the schedule to maximize productivity and avoid any operational conflicts. The old saying that "two heads are better than one" has been modified to "six heads are better than one!"

The staff meeting only lasts 15 to 20 minutes and provides everyone with the day's agenda, including the location of all operators and equipment. The majority of our operators are extremely reliable and follow directions to the letter.

If an occasional assignment is misun-

derstood, the collective scheduling effort allows any manager to quickly redirect the employee to the proper location.

All of our crew scheduling is done on a mass-duplicated form referred to as the daily setup sheet. This form lists all the tasks typically performed by our department which includes mowing, cup-changing and tee-marker-moving, just to name a few.

Having a preprinted schedule reduces the effort of making up the schedule and also helps prevent forgetting a routine assignment. All we have to do is fill in the crew members' names. These schedules also provide a good written record of who did what in case of a poor cut or undetected or unreported hydraulic leaks.

By 6:15 to 6:20 a.m. the assistant superintendent who actually writes the schedule for the week is now ready to assemble the crew, assign the day's tasks, and get them out on the course by 6:30 a.m.


The remaining staff, including me, goes out and changes nine holes of cups

while monitoring the work being performed and checking areas on the course that may need attention.

Our goal each day is to complete all routine tasks ahead of play. During the busy season all greens, tees, fairways, slopes and roughs are mowed before any play catches up. When our members tee off, 95% of the time the only equipment they will encounter is heading back to the shop for cleaning and refueling.

Before any crew member completes his or her first work assignment, one of my assistants will return to the shop and write up second job assignments on a centrally located chalk board.

The second jobs are taken from a list of projects that we have collectively discussed and prioritized. Usually by noon all first assignments have been completed and the crew has been reassigned to their final tasks for the day.

The staff can breathe a collective sigh of relief knowing that another day went smoothly, because we simply planned our work and worked our plan! 

George Elliott of Addison Reserve Uses Georgia Grass on His Greens

Here's Why!

"I first visited Millhaven Plantation when I had to renovate the greens at Mayacoo Lakes Country Club back in 1993. I was very impressed with the quality of their Tifdwarf and had them send me down a batch of sample sprigs. The samples looked good, so I ordered 3,000 bushels of sprigs to renovate 18 greens. We hydro-sprigged those greens and were playing on them in less than 7 weeks. Here at Addison Reserve we already have 18 greens in place, and we're putting in another 9 - all certified Tifdwarf from Millhaven. We also used Millhaven's Tifway on most of our fairways. I think the entire course looks and plays great."



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Did I say that it only rains hard when you lay down new sod? I lied. It also rains hard during special events. It invariably happens that in the haste to finish preparations for an event, not everyone checks with the superintendent before driving on the golf course and accidental damage is done. Photo by Joel Jackson.

...And then there's Murphy's Law!

A superintendent can plan on things not going as planned

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

My compatriots in this section have done an excellent job telling us about the similarities and differences of their daily responsibilities. I would agree that these descriptions are accurate at least 90 per cent of the time. They describe the relentless routine nature of our work required to produce consistent results for our members and guests. It is my task to portray items that fall into the other 10 per cent of our days. The weird things that do play a part in our "routine" days. Murphy's Law come to mind – if something can go wrong, it usually will, and often at the worst possible time! I present to you a collection of photographs of some of the things that can and do go wrong on a day in the life of a golf course superintendent.

In these photos, I have only scratched the surface of the unusual things superintendents have to take in stride on some days. Fortunately, superintendents are very gifted at solving emergencies and pulling off the impossible mission. Depending on your point of view, you may consider the routine or the unusual a typical day in the life of a golf course superintendent.



Our crews spend valuable maintenance time doing things that all golfers should do as part of golf etiquette. These rules were not written to make superintendents' jobs easier. They were written as common courtesy to keep the course playable for all of the golfers. Repairing ball marks right after they are made keeps the green a lot healthier and smoother. Photo by Joel Jackson.



I've had two helicopter adventures. The first was to stand under a hovering helicopter as it dried out wet top dressed greens so we could drag them in and open the course for a shotgun tournament the next morning. The other is pictured here when a helicopter had to make an emergency landing on the course after blowing a hydraulic line over a green during a photo shoot. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Superintendents are often called upon to correct flaws in a course design. Pine straw on a bare slope moves downhill in a heavy rain. That's not Murphy's Law. That's the Law of Gravity. Photo by Joel Jackson.



A drain basin in a depression in a pine straw area will get clogged by the moving pine straw. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Unfortunately, not all damage is accidental. A considerable investment of time, work and money can be destroyed in a few thoughtless moments! Photographer unknown.



An irrigation blowout. Usually an overnight occurrence that greets you in the morning with a flood, a mound or a hole and lost irrigation coverage to deal with. Photo by Joel Jackson.



I wish I had a nickel for every unfilled divot on my golf course. I'd make money even though I have to pay someone to try and fill them all so the course will look and play better. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Mother nature's blowout. A phenomenon common during construction and renovation projects. It never rains hard until you lay new sod down on a slope! Photo by Joel Jackson.



A clogged drain basin produces an unexpected water hazard. Superintendents have been known to take off their shoes and roll up their pant legs and wade in to solve the problem temporarily. Eventually the sloping pine straw areas are sodded, and work turns to more important jobs, like grooming the turf. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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