

Golf Course Superintendent or Greenskeeper?

What are we really? With all the things that we get involved in by choice or by just trying to stay one step ahead, sometimes I think we forget our focus.



Image-building, job titles, marketing strategies and public perception may be the modern consequences of golf's popularity to our profession, but the bottom line is we are first and foremost, keepers of the green.

Regardless of the outcome of GCSAA's Professional Development Initiative, maintaining good golf course conditions is what it is all about.

Compared to the golf professional, our jobs have drastically changed with all the things we need to keep up with: FQPA; PDI, Sara Title III; OSHA; county, state and national laws just to mention a few.

Then there are the groups we join to keep up our education on turf management and regulations. GCSAA, USGA, FSGA, TCGCSA, FGCSA and FTGA. Don't get me wrong: these are all great organizations and I am a member of all of them, but regardless of all the administration and regulation, our real job boils down to golf course conditions.

My family came to this country from England in the 1940s, and has been in the golf business for many years. My grandfather and his brothers were golf professionals in England. Their father and uncles were also in the golf business.

The MacDonalds have been playing this great game for over 200 years in this country, England and Scotland. The love for playing the game of golf came from my father, brother and my great uncle who all taught me the great game of golf. Over

there, superintendents are still called greenskeepers and their professional association is called the British and International Greenskeepers Association.

No matter what you call us or how our job descriptions have changed, we are about the game of golf just like Jack, Arnold, Sam, Ben and the rest of the great golfers over the past 200 years. So how do I keep my focus and carry out my primary responsibility of maintaining good playing conditions? I play golf!

The last greenskeeper I worked for taught me many things, but the one thing that sticks out is he always found time to go out and play a few holes. Most of the time it was long after the crew had gone home or early on a weekend morning. We were both very lucky in that way, we both really love to play the game.

If I don't play my golf course at least once a week, I feel as if I let my members down. Because to me that is one of the best ways a person can really evaluate his or her golf course's conditions. We also have a few Tour players who play out of my golf club. I take the time to talk to them and compare our course to the ones they play on the tours.

Playing other courses is also a great way of knowing what is going on. The next time you are in the clubhouse and

one of your members says, "Joe's course is always in good shape. Why can't we be that good?" You will have an answer for him: budget, overseeding, new grass, new irrigation system, new greens, etc.

If you don't have time to play other courses, just go look at them. When was the last time you went and looked at three or four golf courses in one day? You can compare first hand what "Joe" is doing up the street just by going and looking at a few his greens and talking to him about his current programs.

Playing golf with my members is something else I try to do. This does not happen on a regular routine but I do try to do this six or seven times a year. This seems to work for me and might not be for everyone. But I really think that if you don't play a few times a month, you don't know your course as well as you think.

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