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President's Message



1978 was a great year for Florida Golf Course Superintendents! Unity of the seven state associations has been accomplished through the Florida Golf Course Superintendent's Association. We had the finest FT-GA Show ever in October. And in addition to all that "*The South Florida Green*" won national honors.

But what lies ahead in 1979? Nobody knows for sure. The government is predicting a recession. That means tight money for golf course budgets. More government regulations will force us to be better managers.

Do you want to get a headstart on the 1979 unpredictables? I can think of no better preparation than attending the G.C.S.A.A.'s 50th International Turfgrass Conference and Show in Atlanta, Georgia, February 4-9, 1979. Demonstrate to your club that you intend to do everything possible to ensure a great and profitable future for both yourself and your golf course.

Make your reservations now and I hope to see you in Atlanta.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Jones". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

The South Florida Green

The Official Bulletin of the South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association

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RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

By PAUL R. MacDONALD



Just as in the movies, golf too, has its stars, its glamorous figures. But it also has its anti-heros as well. Who are these enigmatic characters? They are the men too busy for public relations! Instead of polishing the apple in the public eye, they are tending the apple and its blossoms. The golf course superintendent is finally emerging from the bushes. Today's golf course superintendent must literally be a man for all seasons — Botanist, chemist, engineer, accountant — these are but a few of his roles. At some courses he is also owner, manager, and professional and all that that entails. By the way, don't be surprised if the superintendent turns out to be a female.

The golf course superintendent must also be a man of disappearances. In a sense he ghost writes the entire course. He may arrive at daybreak or long after midnight for watering or some unforeseen crisis. He is on call with his patient twenty-four hours a day. Tour professionals are the egoists of the game; superintendents tend to remain invisible. Their rewards are not trophies or prize monies but rather the satisfaction of controlling the major asset of a golf club - the golf course itself. He is the linchpin between the appreciation of the members and the dreams of the green committee. His joy is in the craftsmanship of his art.

Viewed from a financial perspective, we notice that the maintenance and turf equipment side of golf annually expends more than **one billion dollars** as compared to other market expenditures: golf balls - ninety million; golf clubs - two hundred ten million; golf clothes and shoes - three hundred million; or even food and beverages that reaches nine hundred-seventy million. So, not only does the superintendent manage the major asset, the golf course itself, but revenues to maintain this asset are the highest in the game.

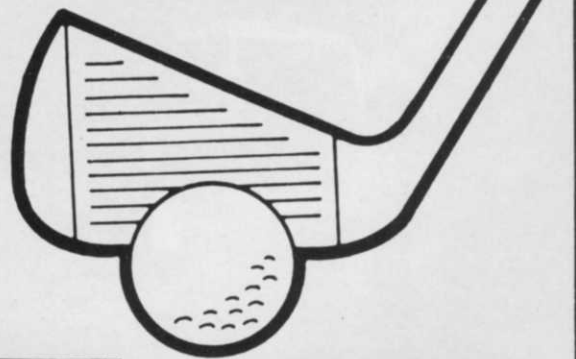
In this age of scarcity and of regulation the golf course superintendent qualifies as golf's most highly educated person. Over fifty percent are college educated, while many have advanced degrees. As in other professions, he may become certified by passing a six-hour examination after becoming a member of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America, but he is also required to be licensed by his state as a certified pesticide applicator. Amongst other things, he must understand turfgrasses, chemicals that control turfgrasses, machinery, fertilization and new

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RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE (Continued)

sophisticated irrigation systems as well. Despite such proficiency and scientific knowledge, and technical training notwithstanding, it may be many golfing seasons before the custodial image that has stereotyped the superintendent in golf can hold par with the concept of the professional.

How ironic then that the golf course superintendent's most awesome opponent eludes all of this scientific knowledge, i.e. the forces of nature herself. As far as landscaping, his insight must encompass knowledge of different grasses, trees, shrubs, soils, soil compositions, plant diseases such as nematodes and dollar spot and their cures; when it comes to wind patterns, humidity, rainfall and snowfalls, the golf course superintendent must be more alchemist than chemist.

How would you program maintenance chores at the world's highest championship golf course — The Ranch at Keystone, Colorado — over 9,000 feet high in the Rockies? Lou Haines, the new Director of Grounds, has this problem and hopefully the solutions. His father, Jim Haines, Superintendent for many years at Denver Country Club is noted for his invention of a tree root cutter and a leaf raker. Haines Sr., incidentally, was one of the first superintendents to be the recipient of the USGA Green Section Award.

Malcolm R. McLaren, a GCSAA Past President, developed a turf slicer at his club, Canterbury, in Cleveland in preparation for the 1946 USGA Open. This was one of the first attempts at aeration and no mean accomplishment.

Green committee chairmen, eager to leave their imprint on their golf courses, may also be called anti-heros, but many get a good education in the process. They seldom appreciate the value of the superintendent. David C. Holler, Superintendent of the prestigious Gulph Mills Golf Club in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, has aptly expressed a superintendent's lament: "... a green chairman is proficient in his own field, but he seldom has experience in agronomy; yet he assumes responsibility to club members for the condition of the golf course. The golf superintendent knows his business - he is a professional - so let him run it, just as you allow a department manager to run his operation."

This is not to say, however, that superintendents represent an amorphous mass of nameless men. The name Joe Valentine, may someday be as popular as Arnold Palmer's for his contribution to the game in his discovery of Merion bluegrass. Without a public relations firm or press corps to accelerate his fame, the Valentine accomplishment has meaning for every golfer and will be looked upon as one of the major achievements of this era.

Incidentally, do you know or would you recognize the superintendent of your golf club? It is more than likely that you are acquainted with your club professional, having had lessons or bought equipment and you may even know your board-of-directors, and, of course, your favorite caddy. Yet, your golf course superintendent is probably known to you only through his artistry. The next time someone mentions the word professional you might consider asking which professional.

Like other professions, women are becoming interested in this challenging field. The Golf Course Superintendents Association lists four who are superintendent members - up one-hundred percent from the previous year. A relatively new trend emerging too, is the addition of ladies to maintenance crews at some golf courses. It is not uncommon to see a comely ms. in a T-shirt, riding down the fairway or weeding a flower bed.

George W. Cleaver, the new President of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association and himself superintendent at Chestnut Ridge Country Club, Lutherville, Maryland - a suburb of Baltimore - for more than eighteen years, said recently "... being a golf course superintendent is a tricky, tough business. It is not something that can be standardized as is a certified public accountant or a certified life underwriter. There are just too many variables, and many of the major factors, such as weather, budgets, golfers' desires are out of the individual superintendent's hands. Golf courses are like living things and no two courses are alike."

Besides keeping the grass green and mowed, superintendents must conform to many new stipulations and regulations that have evolved from recent environmental studies. While custodial images are hard to eradicate, the sophistication of the golf course superintendent's role is gradually bringing him not only the position, but the recognition he deserves. Perhaps that bumper sticker that reads "Have you hugged your dog lately" should have as its corollary, "Have you hugged your superintendent lately"?

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Paul R. MacDonald is marketing manager, AG-TURF Department, Johns-Manville Sales Corp., Fresno, Calif. Mr. MacDonald is Past President of the National Golf Foundation and Past President of the Golf Ball Manufacturers Association.

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Project Your Image Over The Mist

"Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but by ascending a little you may often look over it altogether" (Arthur Helps)

A little-known quote from a man we have never met but what a profound effect it could have on our efforts to become the recognized professionals we all aspire to become. To lift ourselves above the feeble attempts to convince our members and colleagues that we deserve much more than we get. Just calling ourselves professionals and telling each other we are does not a professional make.

How many meetings have you had with fellow Superintendents who begin their acquaintance with some remark like, "I have a pretty good layout but the membership won't let me have the money to do the job," or "We just have to get the job done with what we have because our members can't afford to raise the dues." To add to his martyrdom, some announced EXPERT gets up at your local meeting and spends 30-45 minutes telling you those members expect you to maintain that rock-pile in tournament condition with the same budget as last year and you are just going to have to learn how to accomplish this as professional superintendents. Have you ever met an EXPERT in the field of Turf Management — Superintendents, as you know, are not classed as EXPERTS — who didn't say you were the greatest bunch of guys in the world? Then in the next breath, they're telling you that you just have to learn to do more with less. It occurs to me that these individuals may be experts in Rhetoric but something less than knowledgeable in the field of Turf Management.

Here we are down in the mist sweeping away like mad but to no avail. Any man who can claim to give his members a better course (with today's labor, material, and equipment costs) for the same money has lost touch with the industry or has a membership that will not long accept his quality of maintenance. We may even consider the possibility that his past efforts have been less than professional if he can suddenly produce results with the same budget.

By AL FRENETTE



This brings us back to the purpose of our discussion. In order to see above the mist, we must recognize that our industry is part of the free enterprise system. We do not enjoy subsidies, tax exemptions, or federal grants. We must operate within the economic realities of the business world; which means competing for labor, paying the going price for equipment and materials and providing the fringe benefits that go with operating any business.

Determine the needs of your membership. What quality do they want? Once this is understood, all related efforts must be approached realistically. Determining the needs of your membership should be a continuing process. Listen to the ideas and complaints of each individual member. Be receptive to constructive criticism. Be prepared to reconcile even the most ridiculous suggestions to maintain harmony.

Prepare your requirements and justifications and then be prepared to make a convincing presentation. For clarity, let's consider some of the items that might be in your presentation:

Labor - This is the largest percentage item in the budget but has traditionally been the least realistic. We have agonized for years with less than adequate personnel because this has been the way IT IS. It is time to recognize that the job is not going to get done properly without skilled technicians who can be encouraged to stay with the club. They should be paid competitive wages and provided with reasonable fringe benefits as added incentives.

Training programs must be organized on a State or Regional level to provide a pool of apprentices prepared to fit into the routine of turf maintenance procedures.

(Continued on page nine)

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PROJECT YOUR IMAGE (Continued)

State Superintendents' associations can be the leaders in such a program with benefits equal to or surpassing existing halfhearted research efforts. What better trade for a young man to pursue in one of the local Vo-tech schools? You, the superintendent, not the club, will be the one to initiate such a training program.

For years, labor has been recognized as the main problem within the profession. Solving this problem will certainly help raise us above the mist.

Consider two areas where many of us give too little thought to our responsibility as professional superintendents; preparing the assistant and training the turf student:

The Assistant - Once we have made the decision to employ an assistant, our responsibility is twofold: (1) Provide the individual with the opportunity to learn all he can to prepare himself for the time he becomes a superintendent, and (2) Provide your membership with a competent individual who can maintain continuity in the daily operation of the course in the absence of the superintendent due to superintendent meetings, vacations, illness or other emergency.

The Turf Student - You may decide to employ turf students to supplement your seasonal crew. In doing so, you have accepted a responsibility to the student and to his or her school. The student expects to participate in a varied host of disciplines. He or she does not anticipate spending the placement training period just riding a tractor or raking bunkers. They hope to have the opportunity to engage in every procedure on the course.

The superintendent and his assistant should afford the student a chance to learn each skill on the course. In addition, the student should be required to exhibit his or her understanding of the disciplines studied in school such as:

- Turf and weed identification
- Tree and shrub identification
- Lime and fertilization programs
- Safety in the use, handling, storage, and disposal of pesticides
- Calibration of application equipment
- Preventive maintenance procedures

Once the student has been exposed to the various duties on the course and given a reasonable time to comprehend the HOW and, most importantly, the WHY, the superintendent has the responsibility to accurately evaluate each student. This is a commitment made to the school when he accepts a student for employment. To do less would allow unqualified individuals to enter the field and further dilute our efforts to be professional.

These two areas will increase your duties and cut into your free time. However, it will also raise you above the mist and expose you as a professional. Often we are hesitant to share our knowledge and experience with young people entering the field. This is inconsistent with our efforts to conduct conferences, seminars, and local meetings to share ideas and experiences.

Materials and Supplies - This is an area in which we are reluctant to thoroughly investigate alternatives. It is easy to check price lists or make a phone call and insert a figure. Better yet, the easy way out for many unprofessional superintendents is to just add 10% to last year's figures. Although more troublesome, a complete breakdown of unit prices can save 6-10% of many items used on the course. Breakdown of unit cost does not only mean cost per gallon, pound, etc. but cost of handling, application, storage, value of technical service and availability.

Too often, we use what the fellow down the street uses because it must be good and besides; that's easier than coming up with your own programs. Then there is the Black Magic peddler who has a catalog two feet thick with every answer to your golf course problems. If you really want to know what his products are worth, ask him to see a label. That Cadillac will soon be out of your driveway. How about the guy on the phone from New York or Chicago who has the answer to your weed problems? The only answers this guy has are the ones written on a prepared sheet in front of him. When you talk to this fellow, you are really down in the mist; with a worn broom. When you walk in a materials storage area cluttered with 55 gallon drums of water, from these high pressure sales tactics, question the superintendent's professionalism.

(Continued on page ten)



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PROJECT YOUR IMAGE (Continued)

When you list a material or supply item on the budget know what you are buying, what it can or cannot do for you, and that it is the best value available. Analyze the amount of active ingredients and reduce it to cost per unit or cost per application. Determine your requirements, contact your reputable suppliers, discuss optional materials, price rates and then make your decision in a professional manner.

Maintenance - This is probably the least predictable of all items in the management process. It would appear that no amount of historical recording, equipment record keeping or daily preventative maintenance can accurately predict future requirements. There seems to be one reasonable procedure that will minimize maintenance costs - diligent operator training and supervision. Most generally we are content to acquaint a man with a machine, show him the controls and then turn him loose. This is not proper operator training and supervision. Proper training programs produce better work habits and less down-time due to carelessness.

Then we regularly spot the article in a trade journal concerning repair or replace. There are as many formulas for solving this problem as articles. Manufacturers give us estimates of expected equipment life and trade articles show us equipment still in use that is 30 years old. Somewhere in between we must find the answer to good preventative maintenance, operator diligence and periodic overhaul. This must be accomplished by the superintendent committing himself to some basic principles:

Inventory all available equipment and list its condition.
(Show purchase dates & prices)

Get rid of your "junk pile". Junk is worth cash.

Put all equipment in operable condition or scrap it.

Determine the equipment required to get the job done and prepare your justification for its purchase.

I can hear the outcry, "That's okay for you guys with big budgets but how about us superintendents at the small 9-hole courses?" The question here is not one of affluence of the club but of the degree of professionalism of the individual superintendent. We are speaking of rising above that mist to see the reality of our profession. Being employed at a small club is not an excuse for ineptness.

Irrigation - An item that is coming of age and yet one of the least understood expenditures on the course. Members are completely at the mercy of the fast talkers. We ask why the superintendent is not in a stronger position to assist the club in selecting their irrigation system. Most of us know the answer. We are not acquiring the knowledge necessary to understand the many problems associated with planning the system.

Who should be more concerned with such information as layout, pipe sizing, distribution, pumping stations, automation and specifications than the Golf Course Superintendent? The Architect? (He can advise but generally is not qualified), the Contractor? (He is qualified and knowledgeable but not committed to the interest of the club), the Irrigation Consultant? (He is self-employed to operate over a wide area and mostly not available), and last but not least, the Club member, who is a local plumber? We have all seen the result of a plumber's spigot-system.

It behooves the professional superintendent to make himself aware of irrigation principles, design, performance, installation and automation along with the up to date equipment available. The choice is ours; we can take an active part in the acquisition of a new system or gripe about what a lousy system someone else stuck our club with and left us to straighten out.

Landscaping - We all have members who want to see the course progress aesthetically. This means take no trees out but add trees everywhere. Shrubs around all tees, to add to our maintenance headaches and trees over every green to provide shade and roots for added problems. Usually we end up with trash trees such as Sweetgum, Poplar and occasionally some Hickory. The professional superintendent should be familiar with the plant materials indigenous to his locale and their characteristics. This is where the help of a Landscape Architect comes in handy. Develop a friendship and seek his advise on maintenance-free materials.

If a tree program is to be established, get the help of a competent Golf Course Architect to prepare a Master Plan. Once approved, such a program can be carried out in stages as priorities dictate. The professional superintendent does not haphazardly start planting trees without thought to the game, maintenance or aesthetics. What you may consider a masterpiece this year could end up as a nightmare in the course of 8 - 10 years.

(Continued on page eleven)

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