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Palm Beach Trade Winds



By: Mike Bailey
The Falls Country Club

How Professional is Professional?

It is relatively safe to say, "the image of the golf course superintendent has been drastically upgraded over the past twenty years, from the role model of a "greenskeeper" to that of a more current, up to date "golf course manager". I would like to dissect and elaborate upon the specific topic of "professionalism."

Our industry has been receiving resistance (over the past few years) for the progressive attitude of upgrading the greenskeeper image. Superintendents often hear of our courses being compared in regards to budgets, softness of the greens, number of sand traps, difficulty of play and so on. Recently, however clubs are comparing themselves to nearby clubs in regards to their superintendents. Our individual role model has many factors to evaluate; such as the type of clothing we wear, how much actual labor work we perform, the amount of time we spend at work, how frequently we play golf, and even the number of meetings we attend.

The most significant problem with this "comparison criticism" is the fact that our courses are truly different. Each course must be evaluated by other factors such as public versus private, developer versus member owned, 18 holes versus multicourse complexes, maintenance of common grounds, in house residences versus off property members, the admission of annual members versus equity, country clubs versus golf clubs versus resort complexes. We have just touched upon an array of unjustified comparison, yet the comparisons will continue.

I have discussed this problem of "Professionalism" with fellow superintendents and I would like to share this information with you. While attending a Sunday afternoon picnic at Harrold Campbell's home where a group of friends were gathered to honor Bill Wagner, I asked Bill the question, "Have you noticed much of a change in the image of the superintendent over the past twenty years?"

Bill's response was, "Yes, as for the image of the individual, we have made great strides towards becoming more professional," however in the same breath Bill explained that, "the responsibilities and the actual job requirements have not changed." He reinforced the issues by telling me that when he returned to his course after a stay in the hospital a member of his course scolded him for being observed mowing the rough one hot afternoon. Bill's response was "We're behind and the work's got to get done". Bill's devotion to the course outshines his concern for his image as a supervisor. In review, I believe Bill's priorities are: being a competent, conscionable superintendent, yet that attitude of self pride and professionalism are always present.

I believe that little story tells it all. We find ourselves truly caring about our golf course . . . probably more than any other individual associated with the course. The direction that I'm driving at is the fact that we are proud of our professionalism. Over the years, our image has improved, not only mentally, but physically. Most obvious, we have improved our outward appearance with better dressing attire. Has this developed into a problem? "Sometimes, how over dressed is considered too dressed?" I have heard comments like, "that superintendent was dressed up like a golf pro." Was that comment justified? Most of us would think that dress attire was quite appropriate. The superintendent managed a 36 hole private club of premiere standing, his responsibilities were 100% managerial. On the flip of the coin, "can we underdress?" Of course, dirty jeans, a greasy shirt and muddy shoes is not the proper attire for a professional image. So now the obvious question, "where is the happy median blend between the jeans and the golf pro image?" I believe that lies solely within the perimeter of your individual club. If you are the "working superintendent" of a smaller club where the work force is minimal, the economic situation strapped and no one else is there to get the job done, one's dress

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(cont. from page 22)

attire will match the demands of the work load. This is not belittling the image of professionalism. Anything other than the working image would not prove to be successful. Now let's go to the other extreme: "the total managerial position." A position of high visibility, frequent meetings with owners, members and the staff. This would more often be the case for a complex of 36 holes or more and especially when the realm of responsibilities includes the common grounds. It is often in this role model that the golf club member generally lacks the understanding for the business and will sadly make the comment about ones' over-dressed image". What type of dress attire would be too elaborate? A coat and tie would be considered a bit too much on the course, however this is considered to be our standard image for chapter meetings and conferences. So is this considered too much? No. To the contrary this reinforces our image of being a professional turf grass manager.

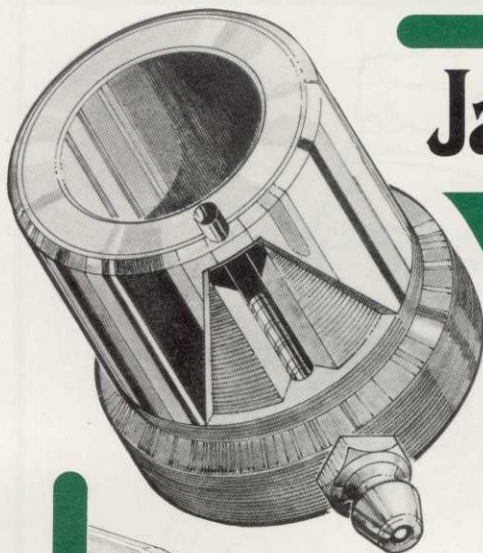
Once we overcome this stigma of overdressing the next topic we commonly hear is, "the superintendent doesn't put in enough time and he doesn't even work weekends." Here again we find many different situations and philosophy that we will review, yet one dominate fact prevails, "the superintendent actually puts in a great deal of time at work." Again, at the smaller club, where the superintendent is more or less a working superintendent, they are usually the individual that unlocks the gate at 6:15 in the morning and yet they also close the gate as the crew goes home in the afternoon, not to mention the other facets, such as opening flood gates late at night when a hurricane is approaching or coming out at 10 p.m. to double check the irrigation system to verify the 2nd cycle of the fairways

came on. And I'm sure we could continue on and on. It is these situations that so few will ever be aware of because if the golfer does not specifically observe you while they play their round of golf, it could very well be assumed "where is the superintendent today?"

Each course has its own structure or command, however, I believe that seldom will you find a situation where management is not on the property at least 40 hours a week and more often than not, that number hovers around 50 to 60 hours. Typically by 3:00 p.m. we have already put in a 9 hour day, yet often we are assumed to be "going home early at just 3 o'clock, (if we can be so fortunate). Then we get to the issue of not coming in for the weekends. After many years of training your staff to competantly handle decisions and managerial pressure, you let the assistants and mechanics take the responsibility and pride of opening the course for weekend maintenance. This I strongly believe builds depth to your staff. This fact is often overlooked or otherwise assumed, "as being the superintendent who doesn't care, because he doesn't even come in to check the course on weekends."

I believe, after years in the business, along with a competent staff, that the management should not be required to come in every weekend. After all, if we also put in exceedingly long hours, week after week, burn out will ultimately creep in, deteriorating one's drive to enjoy their work. This is one of the primary reasons I do not enjoy playing golf on the weekends, I think we need some time off for our family and for our own good. Then come Monday, we can be fresh for the new week.

(cont. on page 24)



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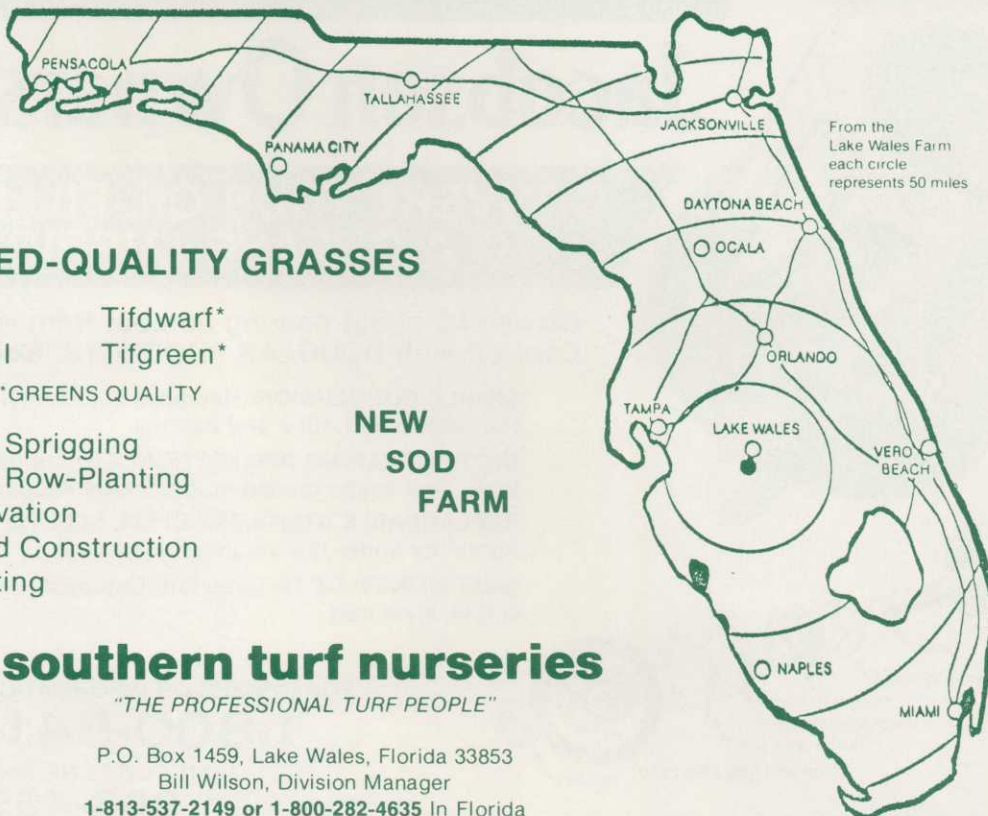
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This takes me to the next topic. Golf — is it recreation or business? How often have we heard the comment “why is the superintendent out there playing our course?” To the contrary, who else can best critique the condition of a golf course than the superintendent? Obviously our club pro can best evaluate the course from a player’s point of view, however the superintendent can best evaluate the agronomic conditions to observe and determine the needs for verticutting, aerifing, topdressing, fertilizations and so on. The sad fact is the golfer seldom realizes that we are critiquing our course as we play. We, in the industry, regard playing golf as a type of inspection and self analysis, not necessarily just going out and playing a round of golf. Then we must ask the question: When is the superintendent to be considered as playing too much golf? First off, we must never play during prime time. Meaning the height of the season or early morning tee times. Obviously, that time should be reserved for our paying customers. I then ask this question: Would it be proper to play around 1 o’clock, after the crew is lined up for the remainder of the work day? The answer to that is “of course - yes.” By the time we finish our round of golf, we have put in approximately a twelve hour day. So is that round of golf to be considered relaxation or work? **PARTLY BOTH WOULD BE THE CORRECT ANSWER.** But, don’t kid yourself, there are many items a superintendent can take care of while playing a round of golf. We can determine if that sand is actually too compacted or that cup was set in the wrong location. No one is a better judge for critiquing a golf course than the host superintendent. Next, is it considered proper to play golf during our monthly chapter meetings? “Aqain, of course, yes.” I try to take the oppor-

tunity each month to play the course at which the meeting is held, this allows me to observe how someone else maintains their golf course. Even more importantly, it gives me the knowledge to become better versed with my membership should the discussion ever arise, “You should see the course I played yesterday, they had. . . .”

The last topic I want to touch upon is our participation with our Superintendent’s Association. How often have you heard the following, “Our superintendent was out yesterday playing golf at a meeting.” There are eight chapters within The Florida Golf Course Superintendent’s Association. Each local chapter conducts monthly meetings to develop communication within our business, giving us the agenda to discuss our business. Hopefully, for you to be absent one working day a month is never frowned upon by your club. Of course, if you are deeply involved with a project at work you will elect to skip a meeting periodically. More often than not, our attendance and participation with our association unifies our profession and we become better supervisors.

In closing, perhaps these comments sound as if I’m venting my frustrations about the complaints so commonly echoed by my fellow co-workers over the years. Were they justified? You decide. Are we steering in the wrong direction to be striving towards greater professionalism. That can only be answered by the club’s individual situation. Perhaps some clubs need just a “greenskeeper,” however where budgets exceed a half a million dollars, responsibilities are vast and the pressure is always demanding, only a “Professional Golf Course Superintendent” can fill those shoes. ■



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Rice Brothers Featured Speakers at 1986 Conference and Show

FTGA's annual conference and show scheduled for October 19-22 promises to be the highlight of the year with plans in place for the largest show of its kind in the southeast.

Featured speakers at this year's show will be the Rice Brothers. Seen on such shows as "Real People," "PM MAGAZINE," "ABC's 20/20," and several commercials, John and Greg Rice are the twin dwarfs carrying a big message regarding motivation. Their presentation will be uplifting, motivational, and "fun-spirational." "Think Big" is their philosophy and they have a personal commitment to excellence with their blend of personal magnetism and astounding drive to succeed.



The educational sessions are planned to bring the latest information to a wide variety of professionals. Three educational sessions include:

GOLF TURF, LAWN AND COMMERCIAL TURF, and PRINCIPLES OF TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT. Speakers at the educational sessions represent a blend of university, industry, and government. Some of the speakers include: Dr. Euel Coats, Mississippi State; Dr. T. E. Freeman, University of Florida, IFAS; Dr. Ken Lewis, Union Carbide Company; Dr. G. C. Horn, Gainesville.

Workshops, popular last year, have been expanded to four for 1986. The success of last year's workshops was due to their practicality and "hands on" approach. This year will be no exception as we bring you:

TURFGRASS NUTRITION AND FERTILIZATION — Dr. Jerry Sartain. A laboratory approach to turf nutrition. Topics will include soil factor which influence turf fertilization and choice of fertilizer materials; how to interpret soil test analyses; the importance of proper timing of fertilizer applications; and the interaction of turf nutrition with stress related problems.

TURF NEMATODE IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL — Dr. R.A. Dunn. This workshop will focus on methods of sampling for accurate identification of nematode problems; extraction procedures for nematode species; and interactions of nematode problems with control methods.

TURF INSECT IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL — Dr. Don Short. A "hands-on" approach to identifying harmful and beneficial insects of turf. Topics to be covered will include recognizing insect problems; identifying problem insects; and IPM approaches to insect control.

TURF DISEASE IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL — Dr. Gary Simone. This is a repeat of the most popular workshop from last year. The laboratory approach will cover how to positively identify turf diseases using microscopic techniques; how to prepare specimens for identification; and the interactions of disease problems with environmental and cultural conditions.

The workshops will be offered on three days; October 20, 21 and 22 and will be limited to 24 individuals in each workshop. To assure your place, please remember to register early.

The trade show again promises to be the grand event as always. This year, we welcome over 130 suppliers of the latest turfgrass equipment and supplies for the professional turf manager. **NEW THIS YEAR:** On Wednesday, October 21 the exhibit hall will be open **FREE OF CHARGE!** This will be a great opportunity to bring employees, co-workers, assistants — even the greens committee! A total 13 1/2 quality exhibit hours will give you the opportunity to see everything. Hours are: Monday 10 AM-1 PM, 4 PM-7 PM; Tuesday, 1:30 AM-6 PM; Wednesday, 10 AM-1 PM.

The conference and show gets better each year and with our featured speakers, expanded workshops, and great education sessions, FTGA 1986 is the place to be. Don't miss it! ■



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Always a highlight of the Conference. Meet with manufacturers and suppliers. Discover what's available in equipment, fertilizers, and chemicals. **NEW THIS YEAR:** Free admission Wednesday to the trade show. Now all your employees can attend the show!

Once again, the annual Conference and Show promises to offer something for everyone:

- latest information on warm season turf
- industry trends
- research updates
- management techniques and practices

Mark your calendar NOW for Tampa, Florida, October 19-22, 1986. Watch your mail for further details on the Conference and Show everyone is talking about. Can't wait? Call FTGA now for more information.

CONFERENCE AND SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

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- Diagnosis of Turf Diseases
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- Handling Pesticide Spills
- Water Use for Golf Courses
- Aerification Update
- Turfgrass Nutrition
- Weed Control Update

GENERAL SESSION

- FTGA Funded Research
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- Featured Speakers

WORKSHOPS

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- Insect Identification
- Nematode Identification and Sampling Techniques
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Professionalism — An Observer's Viewpoint

by Lynn Griffith

I grew up around the game of golf. My stepfather was a golf pro and a golf course superintendent. As a youngster, I spent many hours around clubhouses and maintenance barns rubbing elbows with "golf people" of all kinds. I'll never forget coming home with fifteen dollars in my pocket at the age of thirteen from my first "real job" as a caddie. I picked up range balls, filled the ball washers, and vacuumed the pro shop.

From all the activity, I learned at an early age to pick out which people were dedicated to their job and their love of the game, versus those who were the shysters in plaid pants. And today, in operating a service business to the turf industry, I'm still aware of professionalism as an extremely important factor in the golf industry. Everybody knows what professionalism is, but it nevertheless difficult to define. There is, quite simply, an air about some people that tells you they are serious and dedicated, and that they mean business. That subtle air of professionalism takes on many forms.

The job of golf course superintendent demands professionalism as much as any field of endeavor. For one thing, I can think of no other form of agriculture where the grower is directed, budgeted, reviewed, and judged by a panel of laymen. I'm talking, of course, about the Greens Committee. Tomato farmers do not have to go to meetings to be informed that their fruit is soft and that yields are down. But superintendents do! The golf course superintendent has to explain what went wrong, even if Mother Nature had control of the situation. This indeed requires professionalism.

The way a superintendent handles the members is of paramount importance. I've seen many a golfer's face beam when a thoughtful superintendent says, "Good Morning, Mrs. Rogers." I've also seen superintendents who snicker when Mrs. Rogers dribbles a forty foot tee shot out of bounds. Now, which superintendents is more likely to be on the hot seat next time number eight has a few brown patches on it? (Mr. Rogers is, of course, on the Committee.) Those who treat their member's enjoyment of the game with courtesy, concern, and respect will

always fare better in difficult times.

Dress should not be important, but it certainly is! Most golf courses are image conscious, and the appearance and demeanor of their superintendent (not to mention their fairways) is a big part of that image. Think now of the finest course in your area, and then picture their superintendent at work. I doubt that your image is of a rumpled, unshaven guy who looks like he just woke up. Your professional image is important to your members, as well as to your employees. The best superintendents just naturally have a change of clothes in their office in case of bad weather or equipment problems. Your wardrobe has no reflection on mastering the intricacies of turf management, but somehow people think it does.

It helps if your shop and office look, if not immaculate, at least organized at all times. If things are too perfect, people tend to wonder if this guy really does anything. Posted job orders and signs urging responsible employee behavior carry some weight. Seeing ancient, discarded equipment overgrown with weeds, and newspapers scattered on the desk is certainly a detraction.

It's also a nice touch if your golf cart is identified as belonging to the superintendent. It tells the membership that you are available, in touch, and in charge. Forty two different sizes of pipe fittings rattling around in the back really isn't necessary.

Doing a few little extra things for important tournaments goes a long way. It's the kind of thing people remember. Some well placed flowers and welcoming signs add as much to the impression that you prepared for the event as freshly detailed traps. Members are proud of their club, and such little touches are especially appreciated when guests are playing.

Encouraging golf etiquette on your course is a sure sign of professionalism. It shows an interest in the quality of play at your club, and while some members simply will never repair a ball mark or replace a divot, they still respect you for encouraging it. Those members that do care will feel that you are on their side. It helps not only to encourage good manners on the golf course, but to recognize it and show appreciation when it occurs. The professionalism of the golf maintenance staff can and often does rub off on the membership.

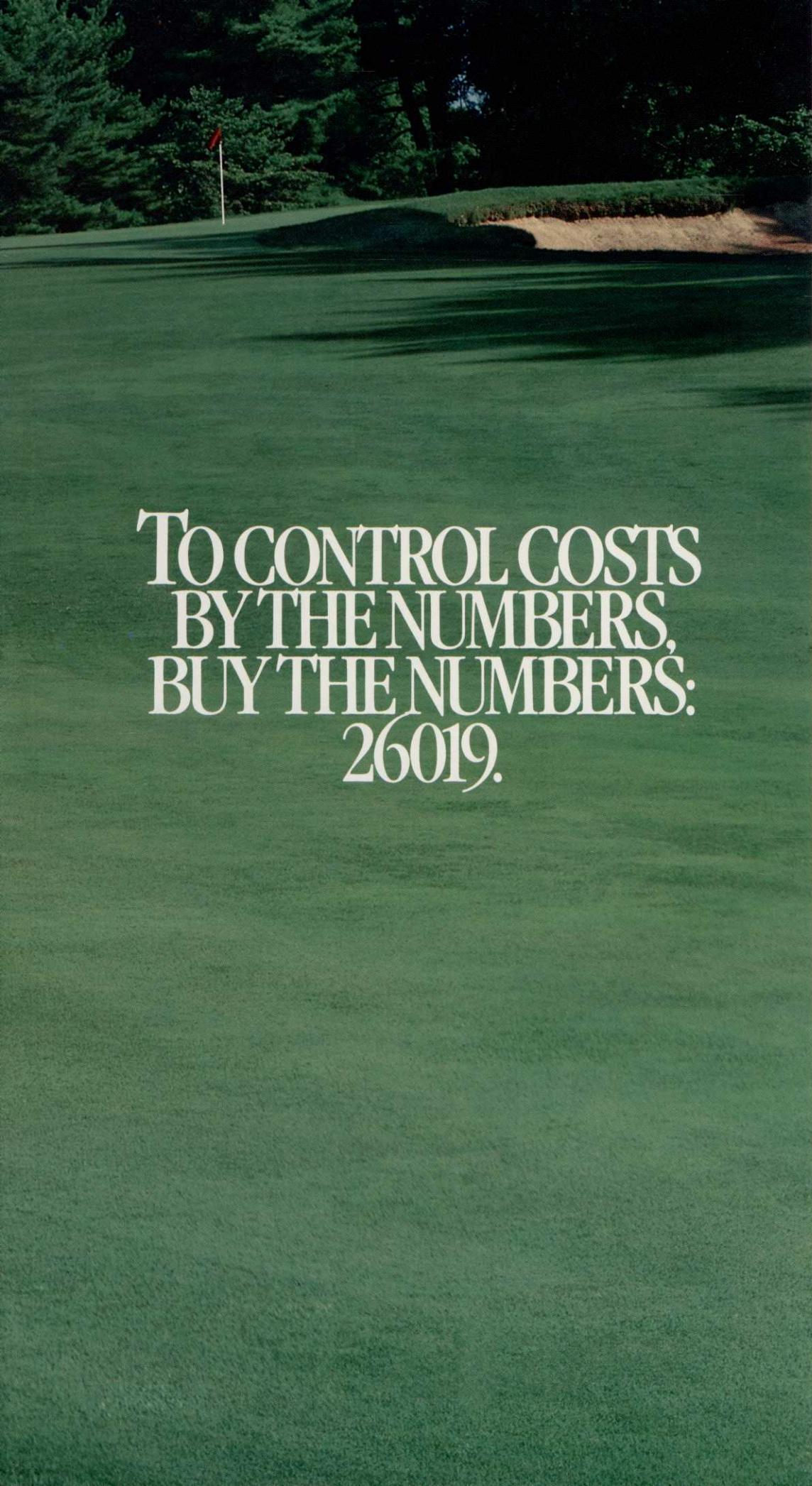
Superintendents should also encourage professional behavior from the staff. Members are impressed when a worker quickly and courteously shuts off an errant sprinkler head or retrieves a club cover. Some golf courses just seem to exude professionalism, but such attitude and performance must come from the top. Professional behavior on the part of the golf course superintendent is important to his club, his employees, his members, and his career, and should not be taken lightly. ■

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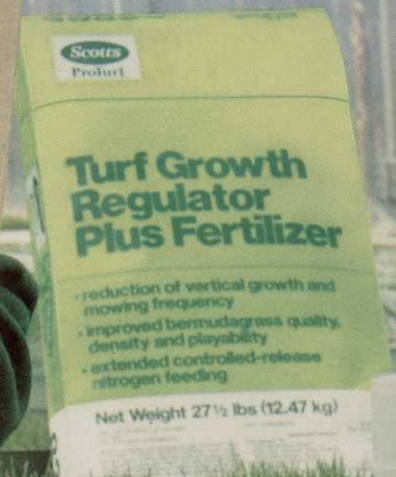
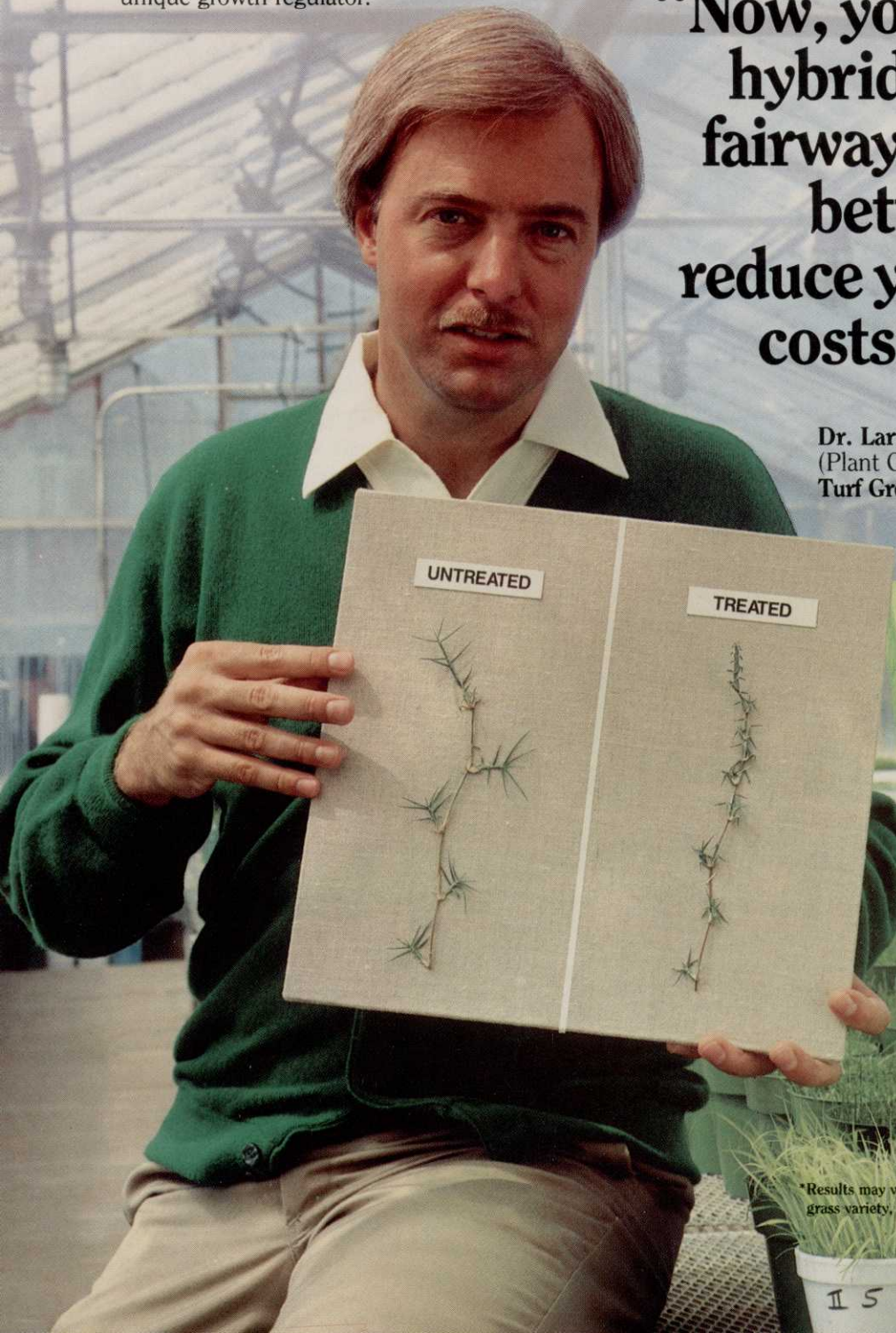
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