

(continued from page 60)

Creek to the north, the Imperial River on the south, and Estero Bay to the west.

The community was years in the planning stage before ground was broken and every effort was made to protect the natural environment. Even homeowners are required to retain 50% of their lawns in native vegetation.

As a result of the special emphasis placed on preserving the natural environment throughout the 2400-acre development, the Bonita Bay Water management System was one of 14 projects in the nation to be nominated for the Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award in 1986, sponsored by the American Society of Civil Engineers. Bonita Bay Water Management System was developed by the engineering, surveying, and planning firm of Wilson, Miller, Barton, Soll and Peek, Inc.

For the golf course, which was built by Wadsworth, the protective measures meant an irrigation system that covers primarily turfgrass areas. Drainage was designed to follow the historical flow of water into a slough, which has been left undisturbed. Telephone poles, used as a foundation for the wooden cart path that bridges the slough, were carried in by hand to prevent any unnecessary destruction of the natural habitat.

Although the environmental safeguards implemented at Bonita Bay required extensive planning and tremendous effort, the results are gratifying.

Golfers who play the course are treated to a panoramic

view that only nature could construct. A large marsh and a sea of cattails separate and define the 11th and 16th holes. To the left of number six fairway, a willow island is surrounded by a man-made lake. Fairway berms create an aesthetic, multilevel playing surface throughout the course.

For Black, building the course was, "the most exciting period of my life.

"We have good turf and I believe this is due to the fact that we worked so hard during construction to eliminate many of the problems you find on some existing golf courses."

But being a new superintendent isn't always easy and Black admits, "sometimes it's hard to know when to stick to your guns."

During construction, the percolation tests on the greens came back at eight inches per hour. Everyone was ready to grass. But due to the excessive amount of rainfall in Florida, which demands faster draining greens, Black refused to give in to pressure and waited until test results showed a percolation rate of just over 12 inches per hour.

With construction complete and the course open for play, Black says his objective now, "is to be tournament ready everyday."

This goal has obviously been accomplished. The quality of turf is clearly outstanding.

Black attributes this to several factors. "For one thing, I
(continued on page 62)





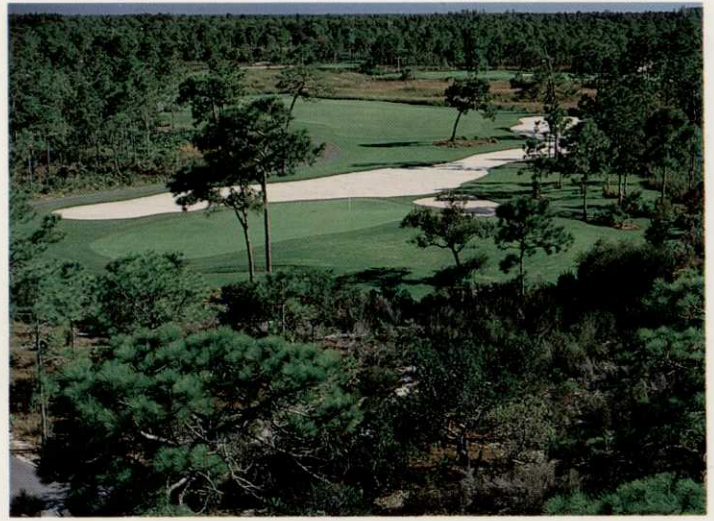
View of hole number two. Undisturbed marshes create an aura of natural beauty at Bonita Bay.

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use as little water as possible. I feel bermudagrass tends to like it on the dry side."

He also gives credit to his excellent staff and, in particular, his assistant, Randy Godfrey, and his equipment technician, Herb Carlson. "The key to success in management," Black feels, "is to surround yourself with good people."

Although he makes the decisions concerning cultural practices, Black leaves the direction of his staff to Godfrey. In this way, the crew answers to only one person.



Slash pines are among the variety of native vegetation found at Bonita Bay. Shown here is hole number three.

Black also believes that by explaining the purpose of cultural practices to his crew, he gets better performances from them. He insists on details, for instance, the "black line," as he calls it, that denotes the perimeters of the greens, fairways, and tees. "It's like an exclamation point, it says something."

And the excellent condition of Bonita Bay says something about Black's enthusiasm for his work. "In this business, you've got everything; administration, management, agronomy... I have yet to get up in the morning and not want to come to work." ■

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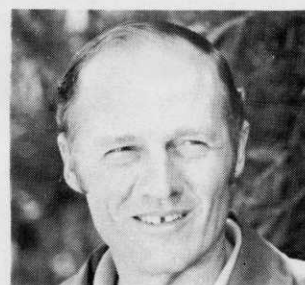
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Role of the Golf Course Consultant

By MAX A. BROWN, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: Because this issue is on consultants, I am re-running this article from the January 1979 South Florida Green. There is much to be gained from Max Brown's vast experience and I am sure our young superintendents will profit from reading this article.



Dr. Max A. Brown

This article presents to you what I feel to be the present and future role of the golf course consultant. These thoughts are based on my experience as a consulting agronomist in all parts of this country and around the world for the past fourteen years.

An effective "cop-out" for me would be to present one picture to you — a group of golf course superintendents and another picture to golf course owners, managers and greens committee members. I won't do that; what I say here is my objective appraisal that I would tell to golf course superintendents, owners, managers and greens committee members alike.

DEFINITIONS

Let's begin our discussion by defining a few terms so that we all are talking about the same things:

First of all:

1) Consultant: one who gives professional advice or services,

2) Consult: a) to ask advice or opinion, b) to deliberate together: confer. Therefore, a golf course consultant is one who is asked to give advice or opinion on golf course maintenance. Also, he must deliberate together or confer with a person. This person should be the golf course superintendent; too often it is with the golf course owner or manager, at the exclusion of the superintendent.

Many times I have been called upon by people other than the golf course superintendent to review a maintenance program. It is obvious that their purpose is to call in a hatchet-man to side against the superintendent. I don't do it. It works out better if management requests the superintendent to seek the help or guidance to solve the problem. If requested by the superintendent much more good can be done, simply through the cooperation which will result.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

What makes a good superintendent? How do you judge and say this guy is a better superintendent than the other guy? Simply by the *day-in, day-out condition and playability of his golf course, for the money spent*. He can only be judged by the quality of his product in view of the resources available to him. He may be stuck with a "dog" of a golf course and no amount of money or skill can make it look good — but he is still judged by it.

If we study this man that we judge to be a good superintendent, we invariably find him to have the three following qualities:

- 1) Well organized.

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(continued from page 64)

2) Technically, well founded in a) turf requirements, b) equipment, c) irrigation, etc.

3) Dedicated man, continually studying and learning. He is a man who openly admits he doesn't know all the answers. He remembers the old definition of an educated man as one who doesn't necessarily know all the answers but knows where to find them.

The better superintendents, in this game of musical chairs we see around us, seek to improve themselves professionally and financially by taking better jobs as they come along. We have seen in recent years that many of the highest paying jobs, with the highest maintenance budgets, are with golf complexes with two, three, four or more golf courses.

The man in charge of operations like this finds it necessary to hire people to work for him who are in actual fact the superintendents on the individual golf courses. He no longer has the time to study each blade of grass on a daily basis. He finds himself conferring with his superintendents, giving advice and opinion. He finds himself to be almost a (shudder) consultant.

CONSULTANTS

A good superintendent has many sources of information at his disposal. With a legal problem he can call his lawyer, a medical problem his doctor, a financial problem his banker or accountant. For technical information on his golf course he can consult text books, or periodicals. He can ask a respected superintendent, call the county agent, one of the state turf extension men, or a USGA Green Section agronomist. Irrigation equipment manufacturers strongly recommend using a qualified irrigation consultant for irrigation problems. A professional golf course consultant is simply another source of information. Used properly, all of these sources of information are good forms of *insurance against a small problem becoming a major calamity.*

All of the above listed sources of information are technically consultants. Some you pay for by tax funds, others you pay for by private funds.

The important factor is that you know your sources of information and use them to *your* best advantages.

The role of the private golf course consultant has varied over the years in this country. In Florida, with its tremendous number of golf courses, the need for technical information has been particularly acute. Florida has had one of the strongest turf research and extension programs of any of the states and it's had a wealth of the best superintendents and best conditioned golf courses in the country. But the demand for perfection has been greater in Florida than in any other region of the country.

Private golf course consultants have come and gone over the years in Florida. Often, they have created bad impressions with the industry. We could blame several things for this: personality reasons, spreading too thin, too little knowledge, and various and sundry poor approaches to the business. But we cannot deny that a tremendous demand for turf consultants has existed, and the demand in the industry is obviously increasing.

What does an individual need, or what should you expect in a turf consultant?

1) Must be independent with no binding ties or axes to grind.

2) Must keep constantly abreast of latest technical information (pest control), equipment, managements, irrigation, etc. a) read literature, b) attend meetings and conferences c) visit courses and superintendents over a wide area.

3) Must know golf, and the relationship of turf to the game. (Grain, moving heights, footing, body, etc.)

4) Must be aware of maintenance practices and requirements of all types of golf courses over as broad an area as possible. Although conditions are different we can sometimes benefit by procedures used in Maine or California. Innovations are made by individual superintendents all around the world and he must be aware of these.

5) Must be able to work recommendations into the maintenance program, not simply make the recommendations. Anyone can tell a man what chemicals to use to control weeds in a green, in a lake or around trees, but how can he work it into the program if the crew is short and equipment is old?

TRENDS OF GOLF TURF INDUSTRY

1) Greater demand for perfection. Very little tolerance of imperfection.

2) Better men are increasingly becoming responsible for multiple golf course complexes, and for more than one independent course.

3) Top superintendents are increasingly budgeting funds each year for obtaining emergency help when and if necessary, and for a periodic review of their total operation. The funds are considered an investment in better golf turf and insurance against major problems. The greatest problem is finding the man or organization who is qualified, whose judgment you can trust and respect. If a problem arises it is better for the superintendent to solve it himself than to have management go outside for help. When management goes outside for help it seldom works. Complete acceptance and cooperation is required between the superintendent and the consultant or the time and money is wasted. ■

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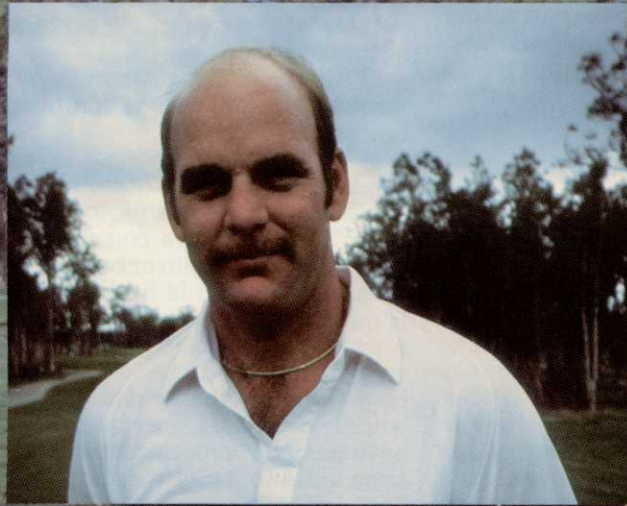
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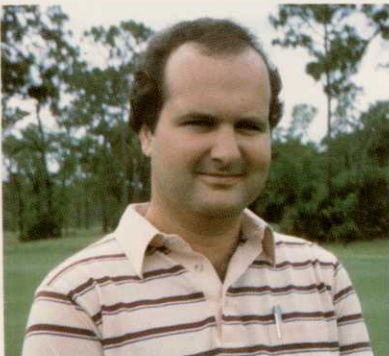
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Guest Editorial

By James E. McLoughlin

Editor's Note: Because of recent superintendent job changes in Florida, we feel that the following editorial reprinted from the April 1986 issue of the Tee to Green is very apropos to our situation.

COMMUNICATIONS ARE THE KEY TO JOB SECURITY

Over 20 golf course superintendents positions opened and were filled through this past Fall and Winter within the Greater New York Metropolitan area. About a third of these moves were precipitated by employing clubs; the balance represent the "domino affect" as superintendents replaced each other from job to job.

A careful examination of the situations where a superintendent's employment has been terminated by a club (not only this year, but for recent years as well) presents a relatively consistent pattern, an insight and the opportunity for a valuable lesson to be learned. Virtually, in every case the primary factor why the job was lost was due to a breakdown in communications and not because the superintendent was not capable of executing on the job.

Clubs and their Green Committee do not expect perfection from a golf course superintendent. They readily accept the variables of nature and the margin for human error. When faced with problems that will always arise from time to time, however both the club and golf course superintendent fail to communicate adequately, or frequently enough about situations at hand. As a result, misunderstandings build on one another, educational opportunities are not taken advantage of and pressure situations do not get diffused - with the overall result that the golf course superintendent becomes vulnerable when he need not be.

Clearly, a different scenario can be orchestrated and should be, with every golf course superintendent taking the initiative at his own club to do so — regardless of his level of performance. The fundamental concept here is twofold: (1) an accurate job description should be written for the position of golf course superintendent that would be reviewed periodically; and (2) the club Green Committee and the golf course superintendent should meet annually, presumably in the Fall of the year, for a balanced review of performance based on the stated job description. Positives would be recognized and acknowledged; questions stated and addressed; and problems identified for immediate attention and review the following year. *meeting results should become part of the permanent club record, with a written copy of the "minutes"* of such meetings being given to the golf course superintendent — for his file and review with trusted counselors.

An interesting variation on the above would be for both the club and the golf course superintendent to evaluate management performance on the golf course simultaneously via two identical check lists — then compare results. A meaningful exchange will always evolve from this approach.

It might take some courage to seek out annual meetings of this kind, but the results will justify the effort every time. By inviting a constructive annual evaluation and balance exchange — the golf course superintendent created educational opportunities that will abound, presents himself as a secure manager and identifies problems that can only become dangerous when left unattended. (JMCL.) ■

Reprinted from Tee to Green.

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