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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.



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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.

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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.

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