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Superintendent Public Relations

It's Frequently Much Harder Than Growing Grass:

Sometimes, when the subject of golf course superintendents' image and visibility comes up, people either get angry, anxious or ambiguous. The word "image" today can conjure connotations of spin doctors and Madison Avenue hype... inferences of smoke and mirrors or sound bites. There is definitely something about the terminology that seems foreign to the traditional perceptions of the superintendent's role in golf.

Perhaps it's because the superintendent's traditional role has changed not so much in substance but in scope that many think special emphasis on our "image" is indeed warranted. Image is perception and perception is a person's reality. There is nothing wrong about superintendents being perceived as professional businessmen. The fact that part of their day may be spent getting their hands dirty is not a complete reflection on the rest of their responsibilities. A surgeon gets bloody hands, but he is also highly respected for his knowledge and skill.

Public relations is 70 percent communication, 20 percent planning and 10 percent timing. You can play around with the percentages if you want to. The point is, you can be a hard-working, loyal superintendent, but if no one knows

Public relations is 70 percent communication, 20 percent planning and 10 percent timing. You can play around with the percentages if you want to.

The point is, you can be a hard-working, loyal superintendent, but if no one knows what you're doing, how well you're doing it and why you're doing it, you might as well be invisible.

what you're doing, how well you're doing it and why you're doing it, you might as well be invisible.

I learned that lesson the hard way. I will never forget the day I was standing with the golf pro on the steps of the Isleworth clubhouse and a member pulls up in his cart and says to the pro, "Hey Dave, the course is looking great!"

Here I was busting my butt trying to manage bentgrass greens in Orlando, working 358 days straight my first year and the pro is getting a compliment on course conditions! Obviously, I was doing my turf job very well, but my public relations and image needed some work.

For all those who view efforts to enhance the superintendent's image as

misguided, off target or a waste of time, please remember that communications and information are the currency of the times. A superintendent's image should not be a veneer and visibility should not just a photo op! Thoughtful, factual communications paired with performance and timely appearances will generate the kind of positive image and visibility our profession is seeking.

Salesmanship - From A Superintendent's Perspective

The image that a superintendent has of himself as a turf manager is certainly understandable. What I see is the lack of conscious understanding by many of my peers that a superintendent is re-

The Superintendent as Salesman

Selling your budget will include:

- Financial compensations for yourself and your staff.
- Projects, renovations or course improvements.
- Reasons to replace old and worn out equipment.
- Reasons to attend educational and chapter meetings to better yourself.
- Long range programs.

To your members you will have to sell:

- Specific maintenance procedures and how it effects golfers like topdressing, aerifying, pesticide applications, etc.
- Specific maintenance/playing condition/pace of play issues like green speed, rough height, cup positions, etc.

- Yourself as a complete business professional not just a turf manager or a greenkeeper.
- Solutions to problems whether they be a result your decisions, your staff, your superiors or natural disasters.

To your staff you will have to sell:

- The why's and how's of specific maintenance procedures.
- Membership requirements.
- Club rules and policies
- Training and compliance with safety procedures and requirements.

When someone suggests you spend more money on a less effective preemergent, it's time to hold on to your wallet.

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BARRICADE ^a	H	M	M	M	MH	M	H	H
DIMENSION ^b	H	M	H	M	H	M	M	M
TEAM ^c	H	M	M	M	M	M	NR	NR
RONSTAR ^d	M	H	NR	M	M	NR	NR	NR
SURFLAN ^e	H	H	H	M	MH	M	H	H
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ally a salesman with a turf management background.

When you're sitting across the table from a sales representative have you ever thought, "I could never do what he does. I couldn't sell for a living." Well, it just isn't true.

More and more younger people are getting into the turf management business. They come with education geared

for the turf industry. They've worked at some very impressive clubs. They have turf experience in all areas but there's a gap in this education — salesmanship.

Right from the time you get your staff started in the morning, you become a salesman. As you explain the assignments for the day, you're telling them that this is important and necessary. You may even explain why and how what they do

will benefit the course, the club, members and themselves. Isn't that selling? You're selling ideas, concepts, programs and even a feeling of self accomplishment. You're selling them the purpose of doing their job in a particular manner and why. How good you sell it will determine how they feel and how well they do it.

Later in the morning you stop by the pro shop. In the course of conversation you let the pro know about a problem with a particular green and, for the next few minutes, you give him some basic facts of what occurred and what you are doing to correct the situation. Plus you tell him that if a member happens to ask what is going on with that green, he can now provide a knowledgeable answer. Now, you've not only been selling valuable information to him but now you have a sales partner with the members.

When you analyze your day you will find many examples of your "salesmanship." Within your club's operation you will have to sell and several are listed in the box on page 42.

You could spend days explaining how to sell these ideas and concepts. Numerous seminars are available on how to sell. There are speakers and book writers who have made fortunes teaching people how to sell. In fact, I encourage everyone to attend a seminar or read about these selling ideas. What sales technique you use will probably be a combination of these ideas.

I'd like to share a few ideas that have worked well for me:

- Be prepared to back up your ideas and concepts with sound reasoning, university research, consultant recommendations, statistics, reports, quotations, etc.

- Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. If you work in a vacuum and don't talk to anyone then you open yourself up to letting others talk about you. Use all your resources to let everyone know what is going on. Use bulletin boards, club newsletters, memos, photos, faxes and e-mails. Hang out on the first tee on Mens' and Ladies' Days. Eat lunch in the clubhouse. Seek out and inform influential golfers.

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STANDARD IN
QUALITY OF
CUT.**



Greensmaster 500



Greensmaster 800



Greensmaster 1000



Greensmaster 1600



Each of these premium mowers offers superintendents a unique solution to meet specific course conditions.

PERFORMANCE PLUS

- Choose from 18", 21" and 26" cutting widths; each offers unique applications

- Ergonomically designed loop handle accommodates different-sized operators

- Kawasaki engine with special muffler decreases noise for operators, players and neighbors

- Simple pull pin allows operator to easily adjust handle height

- Front-weight bias helps mowers deliver precision cut



Note: Features apply to all models unless otherwise noted.

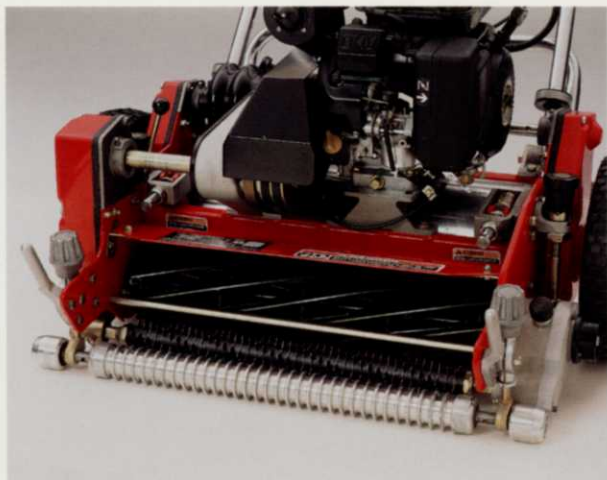
- Patented louvered grass baskets help clippings stay evenly distributed



QUIET PERFORMANCE A smooth, more quiet-running OHV Kawasaki engine offers many practical benefits. Less noise enhances operator safety, helps courses reap benefits of early morning mowing – without disturbing the neighbors.

THREE CUTTING WIDTHS Each mower offers a unique solution for different mowing requirements. For your greens, choose from the tight 18" cutting width of the Greensmaster 800, or from the 21" Greensmaster 500 and 1000 models. And for your aprons and tees, the productive Greensmaster 1600 features a 26" width.

FULL FLOATING CUTTING HEAD For stepped or undulated greens, choose the Greensmaster 500 with a full floating cutting head. It gives superb ground following and a smooth, even appearance.



PRECISION CUT Front-weight bias eliminates operator influence, allows deep penetration and straight line mowing. Greens receive a more uniform cut with fewer markings. Players benefit with faster and truer ball roll.



OPERATOR COMFORT A comfortable loop handle lessens operator fatigue, increases productivity. A "no tool" simple pull pin easily adjusts handle height to operator.

MODEL PROFILE



GREENSMASTER® 500 The 500 offers the best solution for courses with heavily undulated, stepped, or soft greens. The mower's full floating cutting head allows the 500 to follow contours uniquely in all directions even as the weight of clippings increases. Greens receive an even cut with the least scalping. Cutting width is 21".

GREENSMASTER® 800 This all-new specialty mower offers a tight, 18" cutting width for specialty applications. Use the 800 to get an even narrower stripe, for extremely low heights of cut, or steeply carved greens.

GREENSMASTER® 1000 Put simply, the 1000 has earned a legendary reputation for superior greens mowing worldwide. It's the envy of the competition, and the mower of choice for many prestigious courses. Count on the 1000 to cut lower than competitive models at the same setting. Cutting width is 21".

GREENSMASTER® 1600 The 1600 provides a greater range of applications. Its 26" cutting width and extended height of cut range make this mower perfect for tee, apron and other formal turf areas, even large area greens. A dimpled traction drum provides better traction for off-greens cutting.

ACCESSORIES



TRANSPORT TRAILER

Conveniently accommodates two walk greens mowers. Protects mowers and their fine adjustments during transport.

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Dual lights enable early morning mowing resulting in earlier tee times. (Not available for the 500.)

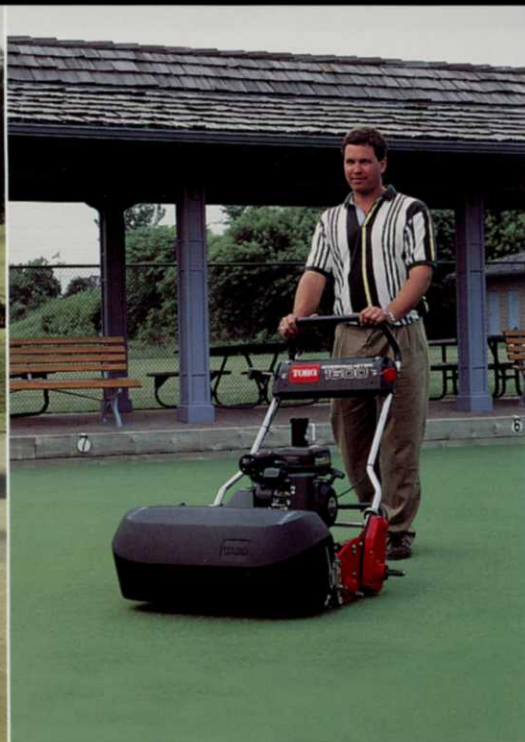
THATCHING REEL

Eliminates need for riding greens mower with thatching reels, and associated risks of compaction and oil leaks. (Available for 1000 only.)

OPERATOR PRESENCE KIT

Optional safety bail available to meet select customer requirements.

GREENSMASTER® WALK MOWERS



GREENSMASTER® WALK MOWERS

	500, #04130	800, #04048/1000, #04052	1600, #04060
Engine	Kawasaki, 4 cycle, 3.7 hp (2.7 kW), air cooled OHV engine, iron cylinder sleeve.	Kawasaki, 4 cycle, 3.7 hp (2.7 kW), air cooled OHV engine, iron cylinder sleeve.	Kawasaki, 4 cycle, 3.7 hp (2.7 kW), air cooled OHV engine, iron cylinder sleeve.
Traction Drive	Transaxle with multiple friction disc clutch. Spur gear differential transmits power to 2 rubber traction drums.	Belt powered, split drum with differential idle pulley to engage/disengage.	Belt powered, split drum with differential idle pulley to engage/disengage.
Reel Drive	Universal drive shaft.	Timing belts from countershaft to differential, drive drum and reel.	Timing belts from countershaft to differential, drive drum and reel.
Reel Construction	Cutting Unit independent from traction unit and catcher. 3.5" (8.9 cm) diameter, 9 blade.	11 carbon steel blades. GR1000 only: Optional 8 blade.	8 carbon steel blades.
Maximum Ground Speed	Mowing: 3.8 mph (6.1 km/h)	Mowing: 3.5 mph (5.6 km/h) Transport: 5.3 mph (8.5 km/h)	Mowing: 3.5 mph (5.6 km/h) Transport: 5.3 mph (8.5 km/h)
Weight	186 lbs. (84kg)	GR800: 203 lbs. (92.3 kg) GR1000: 208 lbs. (94.3)	230 lbs. (104 kg) w/o transport tires.
Width of Cut	21" (53.3 cm)	GR800: 18" (45.7 cm) GR1000: 21" (53.3 cm)	26" (66cm)
Height of Cut	1/8" (3.2 mm) to 11/16" (17.5 mm) (optional bedknife to 1/16")	GR800: 1/16" (1.56 mm) to 1" (25 mm) GR1000: 9/64" (1.9 mm) to 1" (25 mm)	1/8" (.31 cm) to 1 1/4" (3.1 cm)
Clip	.197" (5.0 mm)	Standard 11 blade: .16" (4.1 mm), GR1000 only: Optional 8 blade: .23" (5.8 mm)	.23" (5.8 mm) 8 blade reel.
Bedknife Adjustment	Reel adjusts down to the bedknife through two threaded bolts.	Dual screw "click" adjustment to reel.	Dual screw "click" adjustment to reel.
Warranty	Two year limited warranty. Refer to the Operator's Manual for further details.		



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- Take the time to explain to your supervisor the pros and cons of an issue. Let them become part of the decision making process.

- Listen to what others have to say. Don't always dominate a conversation.

- Be proactive when problems occur. Let people know what occurred, why and what you are doing about it.

- Present yourself in a positive and confident manner. Speak clearly and practice your presentations in front of a mirror or in front of your wife. This is especially helpful if you have a problem with public speaking.

- Dress appropriately for the situation. Coat and tie for board meetings or formal presentations. Clean and conservative apparel for most other situations.

- Prepare typed documents or reports detailing budgets and expense line items. Be specific but brief and to the point. Be accurate. If you can't type, find someone who can. Learn how to use computer word processing programs. Gone are the days of handwritten material.

- Work to improve yourself and your staff. Have training sessions for them and attend seminars or meetings to learn what is going on around you. Keep updated on trends in the industry.

- Ask others for help. Our own egos can get in the way of solving problems. There are others who can help you learn. Call upon your peers, consultants, university personnel or technical representatives to help solve problems. Learn to share ideas, concepts, solutions and problems at chapter meetings and in trade publications.

- Read educational journals and browse the Internet. There are a lot of sources out there to get information. Look and Inquire.

Your "salesmanship" skills result in an image you will project to those you work for and work with. Fine tune your style and technique constantly. And finally, keep yourself approachable and visible.

STEVE PEARSON, CGCS
The Falls C.C.

Resorting to Your Image and Your Visibility

It is a hard thing to promote the superintendent position at a resort course

that doesn't have a membership. When you turn approximately 65,000 rounds per year, you rarely see the same person twice.

So you have to focus on the areas where you can make an impact: dress code, on-course contact with guests, and visibility to the golf operations people, which include the head professional, the area manager, and the staff of rangers, starters, and pro shop.

Superintendent dress code is a fairly simple subject here at Disney because a union contract prohibits us from doing any work that could be done by an hourly employee. So management will generally dress in a nice golf shirt, slacks, and dressy work or smooth-soled golf shoes. The maintenance crew is required to wear a costume that is provided and cleaned by the company. The new hires are also provided with temporary costumes until they receive their permanent sets. Name tags are a must for everyone.

Grooming is a big issue at Disney and everyone is expected to be clean-shaven and meet Disney standards for hair length. Tattoos and earrings are not allowed. Having everyone looking neat and in proper uniform, provides a statement of professionalism that is becoming more and more important in our industry.

Contact with guests is minimal for the maintenance crew. We begin our day between 4 and 5 a.m., depending on what is scheduled for maintenance and if there are any events that day. The first golfers will normally be on the course at 7. The crew usually will not see any golfers during their first assignments but may during their second jobs.

Golf course etiquette is highly stressed. The crew is instructed not to bother the golfers in any way. Obviously, some work goes on during play, such as rough mowing, weed eating, and edging paths. So the crew is trained to read the situation and to respond properly to "the look" that we have all received from time to time. Any complaints that we receive are brought to the attention of the responsible crew member and documented.

Guest contact by the superintendent is what Disney calls a "guest satisfier." It

...it is amazing the amount of conversation that a simple soil probe can generate. It is a great way to break the ice, talk a little about conditions, the weather, or even give a basic soil profile lesson.

shows the golfer that you care how their round is going and that you are available if there are any problems. As you go about your business on the course, it is very easy to approach golfers and make yourself accessible to them.

Once the crew is gone for the day, I will usually make an "afternoon run" and check on the condition of the course. Moisture levels are always a big concern in the afternoon and it is amazing the amount of conversation that a simple soil probe can generate. It is a great way to break the ice, talk a little about conditions, the weather, or even give a basic soil profile lesson.

Golfers will take an interest in what you are doing and what a great opportunity for some basic education. A word of caution, however: It is wise to work backward from 18 and not to follow the same group around; otherwise you will be the one receiving the education, and I think we've all been there before.

Communication with the golf operations staff is critical at any facility. This is where everyone must be working together to make things run smoothly. We have all been caught by surprise when that 8:30 shotgun goes out at 8:00, or when you thought you had arranged for a No. 10 start and instead play went out on No. 1.



Something we do regularly is attend the 5:45 a.m. golf operations staff meeting. At this meeting, either the foreman or the superintendent will confirm the start times, number of players for the first time (we always hope it is a four-some), the tentative numbers for the day, if there are any breaks in play, and if there are any special maintenance items going on that day.

The golf staff supervisor, starter, ranger, and pro shop personnel are all at this meeting so all the bases can be covered at one time. The starter will also call us on the radio when the first group goes out and how many there are. These people can really be an asset on the days when you are fertilizing or topdressing, so it pays to take the time to get to know the golf operations personnel. I'm still amazed at how far a box of donuts at the morning meeting can go.

There are many other ways that the visibility and image of the superintendent can be promoted. The head profes-

sional and his apprentices just finished up a six-week stretch of junior camps at our facility. Each camp was one week long and had approximately 20 to 30 kids. They asked if we could speak with the kids each Wednesday for half an hour and talk about golf course maintenance.

The kids were a great audience. We spoke about greens construction, the price of building a golf course and maintaining it, the price you pay for fast greens, how much a specific piece of equipment cost, what time we get to work, the education required, and so on. Hopefully they will take some of that message with them as they grow as golfers.

We also participated in a trade show at Disney's Wide World of Sports field house this past winter. A USGA specification greens profile was built in a fish tank to show how a green was constructed, and we displayed several pieces of maintenance equipment.

All the Disney superintendents took

turns manning the booth during that week and we gained a lot of positive exposure. Something similar could be done at a member-based club by having an open house at the maintenance facility or by building a similar greens profile display and putting it in a common area for the members and guests to see.

In summary, superintendent visibility and image is something that is in our hands. If we want to improve it at all, it is up to us.

Be proactive. Be involved. Speak with members and guests. Help out other areas if you get a chance and spread the word that we are professionals and know what we are doing.

DAVID DATEMA
Disney's Magnolia GC

The PR Run

One of my favorite superintendent public relations stories comes from recently retired Stanley Carr. Stan worked at the Gulfstream County Club for 30

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years so he must have been doing something right.

I first heard his strategy during a conversation he was having with a superintendent who was struggling with his green committee.

The superintendent was bemoaning the fact that he was always on the job, but it didn't seem to make a difference to his superiors. I got the impression that he spent a lot of time in his office taking care of business of course, but he was out of sight and out of mind of the people who mattered the most.

Carr told the person, "Every day I make what I call my 'PR run.' I make time to ride the course especially in season. I make it a point to let the members see me walking greens and making notes even if the notes aren't critical. I greet the members and talk to them and answer any questions they might have. I have seen too many hard-working superintendents lose their jobs simply because they just weren't visible or didn't communicate effectively."

Carr also cultivated relationships with consultants, USGA agronomists and other outside experts. He would invite them for lunch and introduce them to his green committee members. He would have these experts over for a visit when he didn't have problems just to let his members know he was staying on top of the latest information. When he did use them to back up or explain a problem, they weren't perceived as strangers making excuses for a superintendent's mistake.

Carr always dressed the part of a professional superintendent. That meant coat and tie for committee meetings and boots and raincoat for rainy days. He also cultivated his green chairmen's support by making them part of the process and asking them questions even if he already knew the answers.

He told them up front that he couldn't give them a trouble-free golf course every day of the year. Mother nature just didn't work that way. He also told them that he wanted to feel safe in disagreeing with the chairman if he believed his position was in the best interest of the golf

course. By being candid and yet professional, he created a "we" atmosphere, which paid dividends in job satisfaction for 30 years.

Adopting a "PR run" strategy just might give you the visibility and credibility you need to compliment your hard work in the field and in the office.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS
Florida GCSA

First Impressions

In today's world, with increasing demands and shrinking budgets, a superintendent's image may be more important than ever.

It's that first impression people get when they meet a superintendent or when they visit his maintenance facility. The maintenance building is generally the hub of any operation.

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Most people believe the golf course is the most important to maintain, (which is true) but the “barn” can tell a lot about how the operation is run. This is where the crew meets every morning to receive their assignments throughout the day, eats lunch and receives their training when they are hired.

The maintenance building is where the superintendent, assistants, and mechanics spend a majority of their time, when they are not in the field. It is an area where all the equipment is stored and serviced. Many people — vendors, members, general managers and other superintendents — visit the building during the day.

The first thing someone sees as they enter your maintenance complex, is the landscaping in the entrance and the grounds around your facility. Our jobs are hard enough without having elaborate and extensive landscaping around the shop to maintain.

Limiting the amount of material that

needs maintaining enables you to concentrate on other areas while your site still looks efficient and professional. Eliminating unneeded grass that requires mowing (such as; bahia) reduces time spent in maintenance. By planting cordgrass or other low-maintenance tall grasses, you will increase habitat and decrease maintenance. Around your building, you can plant low-maintenance shrubs, like Walters viburnum. Most native trees, shrubs and tall grasses only need to be watered until established.

Another place people see immediately upon arriving is the front entry into the buildings. It should be neat and clean with very low maintenance material around the building. Placing a bird feeder outside of the entry is a delightful touch, and it enhances conversation with members. Having pictures of your golf courses and site maps on the walls in the front office makes communicating with members more exciting. It is very important to keep the inside of the buildings or-

derly and clean. Everything is a factor to the overall professional image of the superintendent and the entire operation.

We have been very successful with the “Inside Cleaning Program.” With a rotating schedule, every day after lunch someone does a quick 10 to 15 minute clean-up (empty trash, wipe down tables and sweep floor). Then before the crew goes home for the day, the same person spends 30 to 45 minutes finishing the daily clean-up routine (restrooms, mopping, etc.).

One of the most important areas we concentrate on is the equipment. The equipment is paste-waxed when it is first delivered. This protects the paint against the hot climate in the South. Then at the end of each day the equipment is liquid waxed and towel dried, and Armor All is applied to all the plastics and rubber.

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return, it helps your professional image when asking to purchase a \$40,000 piece of equipment. And members are getting that professional appearance that they pay for and deserve on an upscale golf course.

We have recently started cleaning the shop on Monday mornings. It sets a positive atmosphere for the week. Each day all trash is emptied throughout the buildings, shop and fuel island. Every Friday we scrub the floors in the lunchroom, hallways and the shop floor.

Most people reading this article may think, "Man, I don't have that much time" or, "My job is to keep the golf courses clean." From experience, it takes less time to clean each day and week, rather than a massive spring-cleaning or rainy-day cleanup. Like the outside of the building, we made the inside as maintenance-free as possible. Ceramic tile was installed instead of linoleum. This saves money and time each year from waxing the linoleum.

For these reasons and many more, it is important to keep the "hub" well-designed, spotless and extremely organized. It is everyone's responsibility to keep the building in good condition. It portrays a professional image for everyone.

MATTHEW R. TAYLOR
Bonita Bay East

Superintendents with Blue Collars Aren't Invisible

I am a working superintendent at a daily fee course. Part of my day is spent preparing the course for play, mowing or applying chemicals.

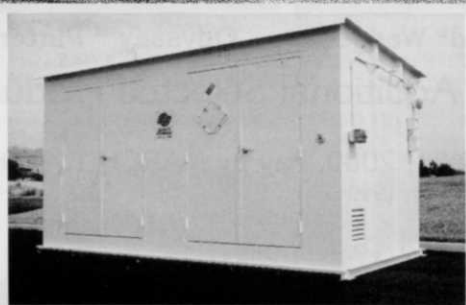
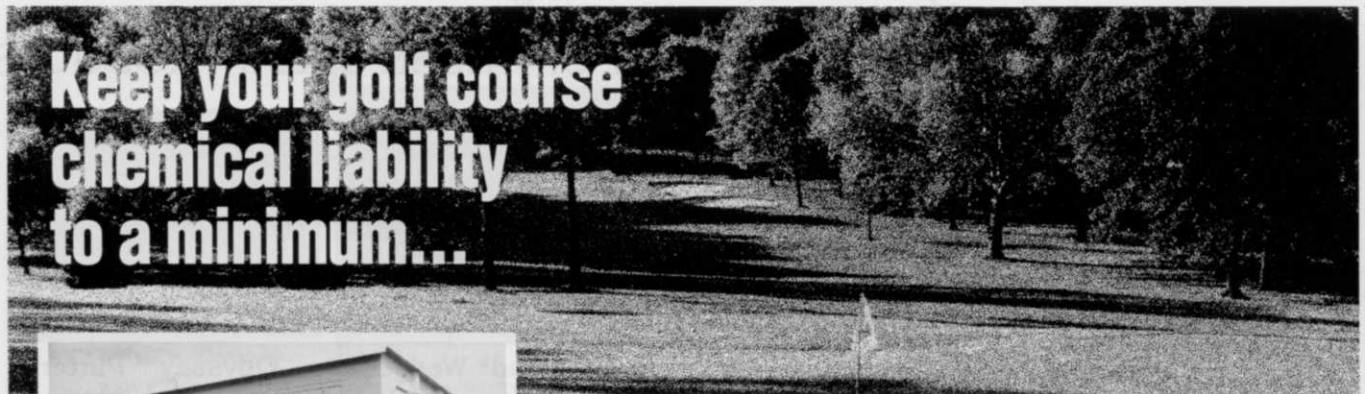
A normal work day at Winter Pines Golf Club is 6 a.m. to 2:30 p. m. with a break at 8:30 a.m. and a half hour for lunch. I usually work three hours on Sunday morning unless a seminar, meeting or golf tournament has been planned in advance.

Since I am a supervisor and also part of the working staff, I have a uni-

form to wear like the rest of the crew while on the clock. Wearing a golf shirt and slacks isn't very practical since I may have to perform any of the jobs on the course. The company provides and pays for the cleaning of everyone's uniform.

Winter Pines is a family-owned and -operated club. Projects, problems and even normal maintenance are normal daily topics of conversation with the owner, Ed McMillin and his son, Jon, who is the president and club manager. They are very hands-on people and are often out in the field working side by side with us on capital projects. So my image and visibility with them are born out of mutual respect for our abilities and commitment to the common success of the course.

Communicating and being visible to members and guests is just as important at a public course as they are at a private club. I usually stop by the clubhouse for either breaks or lunch



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