

# Times turn high-tech, and old (caddie) guard changes

BY VERN PUTNEY

Caddies long formed the base of the game's future pros. Apprenticeship steps were caddiemaster, shop boy and assistant.

Course superintendents were groomed in much the same fashion — hauling hoses, knifing weeds on greens while kneeling on mats,

clearing brush, raking traps and adding muscle to maintenance chores.

Caddies have thinned

to a trickle. Colleges largely furnish the pro talent pouring into golf's money market — the tours. Their expertise is in par-busting, smart-fashion clothing and equipment merchandising. Club repair and related mundane matters are of little concern. Teaching might not be high on their interest list. There may not be much time for members when you're concentrating on perfecting your own swing.

So, too, has the golf course superintendents' scene changed. No more is the future superintendent likely to emerge from the course work crew. Instead, he'll be the product of an agricultural and/or business college, knowledgeable in chemistry and physics and trained to approach a problem scientifically.

Rather than the traditional bottom of the heap in a club's salary scale, he'll deal from strength as a professional man in a highly specialized field.

He'll approach the current No. 1 super's problem — pesticide use and control — from a technical standpoint, and his voice will carry as much authority and credibility as an environmentalist's.

Superintendents who learned by trial and error are a vanishing breed. Maine claims at least three grizzled veterans who took their first tentative fairway steps as caddies in the 1915-1917 period and still are going strong.

Jimmy Jones of Cape Elizabeth started at Augusta Country Club in 1917. At 80, he oversees operations at Salmon Falls Golf Course in Bar Mills, one of five Maine courses he's helped design and build.

Walter Jackson of Kennebunk lugged his first sack in 1915 at nearby Webhannet Golf Course. Except for a 10-year stint with the railroad, during which he found travel not too delightful, he's been at home at Webhannet. He's 85.

Tony DeRocco of Poland is in Jackson's age range. Like Jones, he went the pro-superintendent route after caddie background. He served more than 50 years in that dual capacity at Wilson Lake Country Club in Wilton and Oakdale Country Club in Mexico.

In recent years, DeRocco has been the crack maintenance man at Poland Spring Country Club.

Despite the low pay, long hours and Maine's mercurial weather, none of these three could think of a better way to spend a lifetime. The outdoor work has been healthy, the contacts pleasant. They have met celebrities by the score and golfed with them.

The new breed of super, in most cases not having learned the game

"from the ground up," understandably isn't as familiar with the game nor as proficient a player as the ex-caddie.

Many, though, are accomplished players. More than 100 of the 500 competing in the last superintendents' championship were low-handicappers.

Superintendents frequently play with greens chairmen and members, partly to view the course from a player perspective. During

this playing tour, things which might never have been brought up can be pointed out and discussed.

For instance, "Why was a tree planted in a certain spot?" In most cases, it was placed for a purpose, to penalize a player who perhaps took too much risk. Chopping a tree without understanding the reason for its presence could lessen the challenge of the course as well as its appeal.

Greens chairmen and members

might profit similarly from the superintendent's viewpoint.

"Here's an area that cries for attention? Why can't it be taken care of now?" The reply likely would be, "I've tried to address that problem several times, but the answer always has been, 'We don't have the money.'"

Scores might lack the professional touch, but a few birdies might be bagged in the area of communication.



## Have a cup on us.

Buy a LESCO flagpole now and have a cup on us. With every pole purchased between August 1 and September 15, 1989, we'll give you a free, regulation-size cup made of white, high-density ABS plastic.

To qualify for the free cups, purchase top-quality LESCO poles in seven or eight-foot lengths, straight or tapered styles. Choose from a variety of colors.

Buy the poles you need now. The cups are on us. To order, contact your LESCO sales representative or call us toll free at (800) 825-3726.

Special offer in effect only from August 1 through September 15, 1989.

**LESCO**

Ohio 44116 (216) 333-9250

LESCO, Inc.  
20005 Lake Rd.,  
Rocky River,

