

The times just keep on changing in golf, reports Putney

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education to interpret and explain the latest advisories and rulings on such complex issues as pesticides, pollution and water.

Roger L. Lowell, super at Webhannet Golf Course in Kennebunk, Maine, and Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association president, declares that public relations has become an absolute requirement.

The evolution of the golf course industry has placed the superintendent, he says, into an ever-increasing complex position, requir-

ing added knowledge.

"There are many great educational programs available to expand understanding and prepare the superintendent for his or her very professional position," he said.

"Twenty or 30 years ago, the superintendent was responsible solely to the club for which he or she worked. Today, that responsibility extends beyond their club to include state and federal agencies as well as to the neighboring public and, for that matter, to the public in general.

"Today, superintendents have a

tremendous responsibility. They have had to become environmentalists in every sense of the word. With educational emphasis by so many universities, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the U. S. Golf Association and local chapters, the superintendent can become expert on environmental issues.

"Greenskeeping of the past was an art," he continues. "Now the superintendent has become a professional technician, business manager, civic official and a liaison between the golf course and the

general public."

Brian M. Silva, golf course architect who works with Geoffrey S. Cornish of Amherst, Mass., believes the "ink" is out there in the newspaper and television marketplace.

"However, presenting the supers' side won't become commonplace," he warned, "unless they work at it. It's hard to get attention with limited contact. It's the 'squeaking wheel that gets the grease.' One must be visible."

The well-traveled Silva notes that golf writers at larger newspapers nationwide welcome news from

supers and are very cooperative. "Seldom is there outright rejection. This also goes for TV golf reporters glad to provide brief camera coverage and commentary."

The key is to initiate contact, Silva added.

That's a point worth exploring. Though I wrote the bulk of golf material for three Portland papers dating from 1947 and in many cases initiated and developed several super features, I was not contacted directly by the state organization until 1974.

Dave Huff of Bow, N.H., O.M. Scott's New England representative who has chaired superintendents' meetings, asked me to address the group on public relations. Thereafter, I attended sessions whenever possible. Their "shop talk" was a bit deep for me, but I gleaned many column tidbits. They were not as taciturn or laconic as portrayed.

George S. Wemyss of Wakefield, Mass., recently retired New England Professional Golfers Association executive director, emphasized the positive effect of joint meetings of New England pros and supers the past four years.

"They see each other's problems more clearly, and speak almost as one voice when communicating with the press," he said.

These sessions have worked so well that the pros plan several meetings with club managers. Not too long ago, a movement elevating managers to much more authority in the clubs' scheme of operations gained some prominence.

There remains a couple such instances, but Wemyss thinks the separate structure of pro-superintendent-manager power will remain.

"Attempt at consolidation under manager control usually failed because there was lack of expertise in these specialized fields," he said.

As long as sports departments are ruled by whim, caprice and space — particularly the latter which always is in short supply — there will be no magic formula for getting into print. The super, armed only with solid fact, doesn't rate the attention of demonstration or protest.

Still, the challenge is there. Creativity, inventiveness and enterprise might just work.

Club Group affiliate buys Persimmon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Persimmon Ridge Golf Club was recently acquired by an affiliate of The Club Group, Ltd. of Hilton Head, S.C.

The acquisition included the golf course, clubhouse and a golf academy. In addition, The Club Group has an option to purchase land for an additional 18-hole course.

Persimmon Ridge gained statewide stature soon after opening in June 1989. It has been ranked the toughest course in Kentucky by the publication *Business First* and the number two course in the state by *Golf Week*.



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