

Improvements possible for annual show

All of us have opinions and suggestions pertaining to the recent International Golf Course Show in Las Vegas. I'd like to share a few thoughts with you.

Show attendance was excellent. In addition to the large number of superintendents, I noticed an increased number of builders, club management executives and golf course architects.

The builders' dinner honoring Don Rossi was a tribute to a good friend of many, and especially the

game of golf.

I was displeased with the convention facilities and the head-quarter hotel. Conference management should be more concerned with the facility. Once again, I'll recommend taking a tip from the Professional Golfers Association and locking into the



Charles von Brecht

best facility in the country — the Orlando Convention Center.

I found four positive aspects of Las Vegas:

1. The cab drivers.
2. The Desert Inn.
3. The Desert Inn Golf Course.
4. Piero's Restaurant.

I'm sure Shadow Creek would be on the list had I the opportunity to visit. All in all, in my opinion, Las Vegas does not have much to offer.

I had the opportunity to play golf with two of our advertising

clients on Wednesday following the show. We were joined by the Western regional sales manager for a major marine manufacturer, who was in Las Vegas for a boat show.

As we discussed how upbeat and positive our show had been, our golf companion from the marine industry could only shake his head, envious of the continued growth in the golf course industry.

Aren't we fortunate to be in this business?

COMMENTARY

Document and file: It could save a fortune

It's a menace that is clogging the courts, scaring business owners and homeowners alike, enticing and/or infuriating insurance companies, challenging industry... and now it has invaded the world of golf. It's court suits—a major new industry, born largely of greed, and oftentimes perfected in malice.

Money's great. We use it to pay the bills, buy groceries, go to the theater. But the love of money is the root of all evil. It's a root that has taken hold in American society to the extent that, hey, Bud, the front steps to your house had better be well lighted or someone might fall and sue you for the injuries they sustain. Judging by court rulings of the past several years as this suit-craziness has gained momentum, you could lose your house.

So, a person innocently enters the greens-keeping business thinking it is a safe job. Nobody

bothers you and you don't bother anybody — except the grubs and other pests attacking your course.

Sorry to disappoint you, but now you've got to watch out for the ground water investigators, the bird watchers, the underground storage tank authorities, the people walking their dog on your 9th fairway, and a slew of others.

Meanwhile, your club manager can be checking out which insurance coverages to buy — for himself, his employees, the club directors. He can look into environmental insurance. And now, hot from The Irrigation Association, there's irrigation system insurance.



Mark Leslie

How do you safeguard yourself?

The message at the 62nd International Golf Course Conference and Show was painfully clear at several sessions. It was as if speakers had gotten hold of advance copies of each others' scripts.

Their message: Document, document, document!

If some neighborhood children wander onto your course and you warn them to leave — for whatever reason, be it protection from the pool or flying golf balls — write down the instance and file it, file it, file it.

When you teach your crew about the spray equipment, record it, then file it.

There's a huge difference between having only a verbal defense and having documentation when you appear in court.

This pertains not only to superintendents and club managers. Ar-

chitects and developers now have to look over their shoulders, and watch closely how their subcontractors are doing their jobs.

Arnold Palmer found that out at his home course in Florida.

Now Jack Nicklaus has discovered the same thing in Breckenridge, Colo.

Two famous and wealthy men were sued. Two questionable decisions were made in court.

Were they lacking the documentation that could have saved them as architects and golf course builders? I don't know.

But I do know this: There's a sickness pervading society with these suits, and just a little extra care can save a person hundreds of thousands of dollars down the road.

Anyone already caught by society's culprit of the 1980s won't forget it; the rest of us would be wise to heed it.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Superintendent-pro relationship critical

By Ken Flisek

One of the most important ingredients in any successful golf facility is the relationship between the superintendent and the golf professional. It seems, however, that more times than not friction exists between the two.

This makes the job of both more difficult, and often results in one of both eventually being replaced. Generally, the problems can be easily avoided.

The cornerstone to a successful working relationship is mutual personal and professional respect. Both people are equally important to the success of the operation, and should therefore view each other as equals. (The only people more important to the success of the course are the golfers themselves.)

Although they have separate roles within the club or company, the success of one depends on the performance of the other. The superintendent works behind the scenes preparing the course to its finest possible conditions for upcoming events.

The pro takes care of the administrative details and advance work to make sure the event runs smoothly.

It generally takes two different types of personalities and mentalities to perform these critical functions. Neither is more or less important to the success of a tournament or outing, or of the entire golf operation. Once the pro and superintendent have agreed on this fundamental principle, they are well on their way toward a successful and enjoyable working relationship.

They must respect each other's expertise, while also knowing exactly what the other does. One way to accomplish this is for the superintendent to spend time in the pro shop observing how the pro deals with the golfing public.

I always get a kick out of standing anonymously in the corner of the



Ken Flisek

pro shop listening to the pro answer questions that should be directed toward me. It doesn't take long to realize I don't have the patience to do his job as well as he does.

The pro should also spend time on the course with the superintendent to get a feel for the many aspects of course maintenance. Just being seen on the course together shows a sense of teamwork. This feeling of equality and respect will soon be picked up by the membership, making the job of both more rewarding and satisfying.

There are other basic, yet often overlooked, ways for these two professionals to work with each other instead of in spite of each other:

- As in any successful relationship, there must be an open and two-way line of communication.

There should be an early-morning conversation to discuss any events to be held that day, the anticipated amount of play, weather conditions and any out-of-the-ordinary maintenance practices planned. Whenever possible, they

should also meet around lunch-time to see if there will be an influx of unexpected play or unforeseen problems that have arisen on the course. Meeting informally during lunch has always helped me and the pros I have worked with.

Just as important, there should be at least a monthly meeting between the pro and superintendent to discuss upcoming events. By comparing schedules well in advance, conflicts with each other's schedule or plans can be minimized.

Whenever possible, the superintendent should work with the pro and golf committee in setting up the tournament schedule for the following year. Without this group effort, conflicts usually are not discovered until after the schedule has been printed and mailed.

- Superintendents are usually reluctant to admit it, but the pro is the important link between the superintendent and the golfing public. Because of his high visibility and close proximity to the 18th

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Superintendent-pro relationship critical to success

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green, the pro is usually the first to hear a member's comments about the course, whether they be complimentary or critical. If kept informed of maintenance practices, the pro can respond to compliments by passing the praise on to the superintendent and his staff with the reasons for the improved conditions.

Many times when the comments are less than flattering, the superintendent has a legitimate reason for the problem and plans to correct it, or why a particular project or prac-

tice is being done at this particular times. Armed with that information, the pro can respond to criticisms before they get blown out of proportion.

The superintendent must constantly provide the pro with information about any potential complaints.

Examples would include an unplanned pesticide application, syringing on a hot summer day, an irrigation leak in the middle of a fairway, a sprinkler that ran all night, the need for top dressing and

aerification.

Because of the pro's visibility, he is many times the most important person in the superintendent's public relations effort. For this reason the superintendent must take the initiative to foster a positive feeling between them.

- Each person has specific responsibilities, and must be allowed to exercise the authority necessary to accomplish them.

For example, the superintendent must decide when the course needs to be closed because of a heavy

rain. He must consider the potential damage that could be caused to the course as well as the potential negative publicity he will receive by closing it on a busy day. By assessing all factors, and recognizing that he is maintaining the course for play as well as for the health of the turf, he will make the appropriate decision.

This decision, and the reasons for it, must then be communicated to the pro so that he can do his job of selling the unpopular decision to the golfers. The decision to restrict carts often causes friction because

the golf pro often gets a percentage of cart revenue.

The pro must realize that limiting cart traffic, and his related revenue, on marginal days will result in improved conditions in the long run. That will eventually result in more play and hence more revenue.

- The superintendent can help the pro do his job of settling rules disputes by keeping the course well marked.

The course is an athletic field, and the out-of-bounds must be marked just as in football. Hazards must be clearly defined and staked as well. The superintendent must have a good working knowledge of the rules in order to do this portion of his job properly. The two should discuss any areas where the markings may be questioned before they are marked.

One area usually in question is the bank alongside a pond and how far up the hill the hazard should begin. There is generally a compromise between making the ruling cut and dried and for the ease of maintenance.

- The superintendent and pro should occasionally play together.

By doing so, the superintendent can show that he knows the game, the standards of play and how his job affects everyone who plays the course. The pro can point out areas where he has received the most feedback.

They should discuss and agree on the proper speed of the greens for daily and tournament play, and for that particular time of year.

They should also discuss the height of cut and grass types in fairways and roughs. The average golfer does not possess the skills needed to play on tournament-conditioned courses.

They should discuss and agree on standards that are proper for healthy turf and still provide an enjoyable round of golf for the clientele and budget at their course, not the one across town or on television.

- Each should improve professionally through participation in their respective professional associations. They should welcome the opportunity to showcase their club to a meeting or tournament of the local chapter of the PGA or GCSAA.

Treating the other person's peers in a respectful, courteous and professional manner will leave a lasting impression.

Superintendents usually try to showcase their course for their own association meetings. They should do even more, if possible, to ensure the course is in peak condition for the pro-ams and PGA tournaments.

- Finally, and most importantly, they must individually do their respective jobs to the best of their abilities. They must be enthusiastic and work hard at their jobs.

Good old-fashioned hard work is always a sure way to earn the other's respect and admiration. The appreciation of their employer and golfing public will soon follow.

Ken Flisek is superintendent at The Woodlands in Falmouth, Maine.

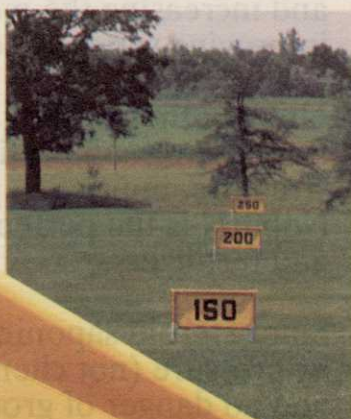
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