

Superintendent must communicate maintenance goals to the golfer

By STEVEN RENZETTI

How often has a golfer read a putt precisely, and made the perfect stroke, only to have the ball slide away from the cup at the last possible moment due to something irregular about the green?

Perhaps it is a spike mark, or an improperly repaired ball mark. In any event, who is likely to shoulder the frustration, the "blame" for such a putt?

It is the golf course superintendent who tends to be judged and criticized for conditions which, in many instances, he or she has no direct control over.

The standard of maintenance of today's golf courses for daily play are at levels once reserved for major tournaments. A combination of modern technology, coupled with a more highly educated golf course superintendent allows the membership to play under meticulously groomed, competitive conditions on a regular basis. This has

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changed the golfer's focus and redirected their expectations. Increasingly, the golfers are scrutinizing course conditions that area a direct result of play.

The membership, working with the golf course superintendent, should ask themselves, "What can we do to improve conditions and create a more consistent playing field?" The answer lies in a sense of teamwork, and a few fundamental lessons in etiquette that are often overlooked, or ignored.

A greater understanding comes with education. Today, more rounds of golf are being played by more people than ever before, and that trend continues on an upswing. At my club, one part of the educational process begins with the head golf professional during his spring kick-off dinner. This is an opportunity for him to spark up the membership's enthusiasm, remind the golfers of their responsibilities (etiquette), to review and explain the rules. His method is innovative, enjoyable and, most important, effective.



Steven Renzetti

The superintendent must continually reinforce these ideas.

The membership's contributions can start where the game itself begins: on the tee. Etiquette here includes placing trash in the receptacles, picking up broken tees, and directing all practice swings to

the side, and away from the main teeing area. Understanding that tee markers are rotated daily so as to give previous days' wear time to heal, a golfer should know to play between the tee markers, as they are set for that day.

Moving forward, if the player is using a golf cart, then proper etiquette would entail obeying the directional signs. Aimed at minimizing physical damage under current course conditions, such signs instruct, "Carts In Rough Only," "Carts Use 90 Rule," and "Remain On Cart Path," to name a few. Obeying these signs decreases the likelihood that the course will suffer substantial (and needless) damage due to cart usage.

A golfer needs to be diligent about replacing the divots he's created in both the fairway, and rough. Doing so ensures the likelihood of the divot area surviving, but more important, reduces the chance that an unfair condition has been created for future players.

Golf etiquette means thinking of those players behind you. If your ball lands in a sand bunker, take the time to rake out your footprints. Exit the bunker towards the low side, as attempting to scale a trap towards its face can cause undo damage and erosion to the upper.

The green, which is often the most criticized area of the golf course, is ironically an area most subject to golfers' abuse. Because nearly half of all golf shots are made on the greens, one would hope that the membership would be considerate of that area. Because of their importance, more time, money, and energy is spent on the maintenance of greens, than any other part of the course.

On a green, perhaps the greatest breach of etiquette is the failure to repair

Continued on page 12

At issue: USGA lab protocol and the liability for failed greens

By STEVE McWILLIAMS

I was surprised in many ways by the article in the June 1994 issue of *Golf Course News* entitled "Soil labs far apart on pH in blind tests." As I understand the article, the USGA [U.S. Golf Association] is funding a study that cannot achieve its stated goal of verifying that the labs are following the protocol. Blind testing will only show that labs are reporting the information required by the protocol, but it will not confirm the protocol was used to produce the reported values. The only way for the USGA to verify the labs are following the protocol is to observe the lab in the process of using the protocol to determine the required test values.

The Green Section continues to focus on the ability to generate "numbers" and diminishes the more important aspect of the use of an agronomically qualified laboratory, which is the interpretive skill required to offer an agronomic opinion. I will quote Dr. Norman Hummel of Cornell University from the USGA Green Section *Record* of March/April 1993: "Any individual who obtains these procedures and follows them to a 'T' should be able to produce good numbers. You should realize, however, that they may not have the agronomic experience or expertise to provide an appropriate interpretation, or to deal with follow-up questions you may have."

The USGA acknowledges in its own publication the importance of agronomic qualifications, yet it populates the lab list without verifying the agronomic credentials of the laboratory to produce or interpret credible agronomic results. To be listed by the USGA, currently, the listed labs are only required to be able to write a letter to the USGA stating they will follow its lab protocol. There is no investigation of agronomic credentials.

Mr. Snow's [Jim Snow, Green Section national director] remarks in the *Golf Course News* article will promote a false

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sense of security in the industry by implying the elimination of the "simple mistakes" will result in all the listed laboratories producing a credible agronomic opinion.

When does a "simple mistake" become the inability to produce credible testing results? How long will the industry have to incur the liability of "simple mistakes" when the USGA will not remove a lab from the list? After the USGA "works with them [labs]" does the USGA intend to bear the liability of the validation of the competency of specific laboratories?

It is time for an industry reality check. Currently, in England, Martin Hawtree, a well-respected architect, is being sued for \$7.8 million because of poor quality greens. I will quote an article from *Turf Craft Australia*, May '94: "In denying liability, Hawtree has drawn the Sports Turf Research Institute into the proceedings as a third party, claiming the institute was engaged to advise on and test the root zone, and approved the mix in question. The club's general manager, Brian Lee, said: 'The best was ordered, the best was paid for, but sadly the best was not delivered.'"

This case may have a tremendous impact on the turf industry and, it should be noted, the Sports Turf Research Institute is a laboratory listed by the USGA. The architect correctly states that the lab advised, tested and approved the root-zone mix. But the key in this litigation may be the lab doesn't deliver root-zone components. And, chances are, the lab wasn't asked to verify the delivered materials using a quality-

control program. Too many times we've seen materials that bear no resemblance to the approved materials implemented in the greens because of non-existent quality-control programs.

In this country, architects may be indemnifying the labs by not specifying in their design document a prudent quality-control program. Most certainly, architects are increasing their potential liability by not verifying the credentials of the labs. However, you could make the argument the USGA has deferred a portion of the liability of credential verification to itself — by Mr. Snow's implication in his article that all the listed labs are either competent or will become competent by virtue of USGA training.

It is not clear to me how the USGA intends to clear up the "simple mistakes," but the process would seem to include the assumption of a considerable amount of liability on the part of the USGA.

Given the seriousness of the current lawsuit in England and the potential for extensive financial damages, the industry needs to have a high degree of confidence in the agronomic testing and interpretive skills of the laboratory it chooses to manage a considerable amount of its liability. The responsibility to verify the labs' credentials and agronomic abilities lies with the person at risk. However, the USGA's blind test of the soil laboratories may unwittingly be shifting a disproportionate amount of the liability back to Golf House. It would seem the best course of action for the USGA to minimize its exposure would be to drop the whole issue of a list of laboratories; if not, then seriously pursue a program designed to verify that the labs are following and understand the '93 USGA Guidelines and Lab Protocol.

The labs are widely divergent in their agronomic abilities to follow and understand the USGA lab protocol. More importantly, many of the laboratories are not qualified to render an agronomic interpretation of the laboratory data.

The industry is at risk.

OBITUARY

Arden Jacklin, 82 Founded seed company

SPOKANE, Wash. — Arden Jacklin, one of the original founders of Jacklin Seed Co., passed away recently here. He was 82.

Mr. Jacklin, along with his father, brothers and a cousin, started Jacklin Seed Co. in 1935. From 1941 to 1985, he served as president of the company and, under his direction, the company became the world's largest producer of Kentucky bluegrass.

"He was the driving force, the leader of the company's growth," said Don Jacklin, who along with his brothers Doyle and Duane now operate the Jacklin Seed Co.

After stepping aside as president and general manager, Mr. Jacklin devoted his time to research. He became director emeritus of Jacklin's research program and continued to oversee research, visiting the office regularly, depending on his health.

Born in Waupaca, Wis., Mr. Jacklin earned a bachelor of science degree in agronomy from Washington State College, graduating with honors in 1933.

Prior to joining the family business in Post Falls, Idaho, he was an agronomist with the Soil Conservation Service from 1934 to 1941. He participated in a grant to research the first grass seed yield trials in the Northwest and planted the first field for commercial production in 1947.

Mr. Jacklin was the 1982 honorary member of the American Seed Trade Association as well as past Lawn Seed Division chairman and director of the association. He served on advisory boards for the USDA and Washington State University.

Mr. Jacklin is survived by his wife Stella; sons, Don, Doyle and Duane Jacklin; daughter Ardith Bryan; 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.