

Superintendents' image a winner among golfers, says NGF survey

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tion (NGF), 56 percent viewed superintendents as facility managers and 88 percent knew the superintendent was the main person in charge of course maintenance.

"Since superintendent traditionally has not been an up-front, visible position with the general public, it might have been reasonable to assume most golfers weren't aware of the position or its importance," said NGF Vice President of Consulting Rick Norton. "But most golfers apparently realize the superintendent oversees a big budget and many people. That's a very positive sign."

Among the other findings in the NGF

questionnaire were:

- 76 percent viewed the superintendent as the person most responsible for the condition of the golf course;

- 62 percent perceived the superintendent as the person best equipped to instruct golfers about the ecology and condition of the course;

- 38 percent said they had met the superintendent at their course and a smaller percentage said they knew him/her by name.

Golfers said course conditioning—the superintendent's primary responsibility, Norton noted—was among the three most important considerations when they chose a place to play. Cost was the most

important item, followed by the availability of tee times.

Golfers said unrepaired ball marks on greens concerned them most about course conditions. Worn tees, limited availability of drinking water and poor bunker and sand trap conditions followed in that order. Many female golfers also mentioned unfilled ball washers among their major pet peeves, Norton said.

Golfers (79 percent) said the superintendent's skill was the main factor determining course conditions. Other factors they mentioned were weather (72 percent), maintenance budget (59 percent), quality of turf equipment (58 percent), and the superintendent's formal

education (41 percent).

"It's good for the profession that the public recognizes superintendents and their skill level as well as these other factors as having an impact on course conditions," Norton said.

Golfers are an environmentally conscious lot, according to the survey. Ninety percent said they believe in the need to protect the environment (compared to 87 percent of the general public). Forty-eight percent said they had donated money to environmental protection causes (compared to 38 percent of the general public).

"The industry says golf is good for the environment," Norton said. "Yet we know there is a large percentage of the population that has a negative opinion about golf's environmental effects or has no opinion at all. The obvious implication is that, with the superintendent viewed as an expert by the golfer, there is a tremendous opportunity for superintendents to reach those who don't know about golf's positive side."

Although most golfers realized the important role played by the superintendent, few were familiar with the profession's major organization, the GCSAA. Only 10 percent knew what the GCSAA was, although those who recognized the association had an even loftier view of the superintendent's role than those who did not.

Superintendent and GCSAA board member Scott Woodhead said the study pointed out the major roadblock keeping superintendents from reducing chemical use on their courses. Asked if they would accept somewhat poorer playing conditions in exchange for reduced water and chemical use on their golf course, less than 40 percent of golfers said they would be willing to make the sacrifice.

"That's the main problem right there," Woodhead said.

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Texas institutes certification change

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has instituted a significant change to its certification program for most pesticide applicators. As of Jan. 1 all licensed and certified pesticide applicators recertify by self-certification. Self-certification will allow the licensees and certificate holders to be the manager of their own continuing education requirements.

CEUs will continue to be required for license and certificate renewal, but applicators will need to collect and keep certificates of completion distributed at accredited courses. The TDA will conduct random audits of applicators applying for recertification.

CITY HONORS RETIRED SHIELDS

TOPEKA, Kan. — For the first time in 35 years, Jim Shields will not be the on-the-job superintendent at the Topeka Public Golf Course.

Shields officially retired last June after 35 years of service at the Topeka course, but he has been retained as a consultant.

He had been superintendent at Topeka Public GC since 1980. Shields was recognized by city officials last fall for his long years of service and even had "Jim Shields Day" declared in his honor on Oct. 13.