



Fundamental to success

I enjoyed John Walsh's column and various articles in the October issue focusing on the importance of grow-in experience for superintendents. We opened our new Robert Trent Jones Jr. course in February 2005 after enduring four hurricanes during construction. Our golf course superintendent, Mark Nykorchuck, who came on board before we broke ground, did a superb job throughout the process and continues to do a superb job. It was his second start-up. There's no doubt his prior experience helped him, and us, this time around. Although a team effort is the main reason for our success, the fact that we have a golf course superintendent with grow-in experience is fundamental to that success.

Ian D. N. Fetigan, CCM, CAM
General manager
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Sarasota, Fla.

Better public facilities

The cover story in the October issue ("From public to private") was well written and researched. However, one has to be careful about making the generalization private clubs are always better than public facilities. For example, in Washington, the highest paid superintendent is at a public course. Also, in Idaho, the highest paid superintendent is at a public course in Couer d' Alene. I've been told by a colleague in Minnesota that the superintendent at The Wilds, a public course, is the highest paid in the state. The most prestigious courses in California (Pebble Beach) and New York (Bethpage Black) are public. I also would venture to say Bandon Dunes in Oregon is one of the top jobs in the country. The most famous course in the world, St. Andrews, also is public. One can't be so cut and dry in stating the ultimate goal is a high-end private club. My public 27-hole course is nicer than a dozen private clubs in Seattle.

Ron Furlong
Golf course superintendent
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Burlington, Wash.

An eye on finances

What a great piece Pat Jones wrote in the September issue ("Grumpy old farts"). He

nailed me with that column. I've been a superintendent for 26 years, 12 of them at Oakwood, an established country club with a small budget and an aging, dwindling membership. I'm always finding ways to do things that need done for little money – ways to do things that a younger superintendent might not think of or might be afraid to try. In October, I added 12 inches of depth to my six-acre irrigation lake by packing dirt in front of two leaking spillways. It didn't cost me anything to raise it a foot.

I'm always ready to try new things when managing turfgrass, especially with my greens. Twenty-six years hasn't come close to teaching me all I need to know about greens care, especially when I have to watch the club's money so closely. I've never lost track of my and the members priorities – excellent conditions daily for about half the money the big boys in town do it for.

Jeff Elmer, CGCS
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Kansas City, Mo.

Career guidance

Jim McLoughlin's career seminar, guidance and friendship has worked again. Recently, I was offered the golf course superintendent job at North Hempstead Country Club in Port Washington, N.Y. With so little movement in the area, and two out of the four jobs going to assistants, prospects didn't look good. Shortly after, I met with club officials to finalize my contract. Before that, I reviewed Jim's negotiating tips and contract template from his seminar. My Web site was used by the entire search committee, and it was able to encourage more interested members to view the site. I created a PowerPoint presentation, along with hand-outs, for each of the two interviews. I also visited the golf course a few times, walking it twice, and met with the golf pro and the g.m. on separate occasions, which allowed me to gain valuable insight. Members of North Hempstead came to view the condition of the golf course at Fairview Country Club in Greenwich, Conn., where I was working at the time. This was the clincher.

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