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PLUM PERFECT

NOTE FROM PAT: For a couple of decades, I've tried to write columns that offer perspective and insights for superintendents. Recently, I read a blog post by Adam Garr, superintendent at Plum Hollow CC in Southfield, Mich., and realized I could never write something that captures life in the crazy world of golf course maintenance as well as his words. I just couldn't write it better than this...so we're reprinting Adam's blog post here to give it the attention it deserves.

I'm a golf course superintendent. I wake up before the birds. I am fueled on caffeine, sugar and adrenaline. I have the worst farmer's tan you've ever seen. I grind my teeth when I see a cart parked too close to a green. I don't punch a clock so I never know when my day will end. I bite my tongue when I am regularly assaulted about green speed. Most people think all I do is drive around all day on a cart. I know the golf course better than the most-tenured member. I am a motivator, a scientist, a counselor, a disciplinarian, a politician, and a psychologist – sometimes all at the same time. I race the setting sun on my way home. And I wake up and do it again the next day.

I'm a superintendent and I love my job. But there's a hidden cost to this business, and it's not something you learn in turf school. It's something you learn once you get out here and realize this isn't just a job, it's a way of life. You must be committed to what you're doing, and you must believe in yourself and get your staff to believe in you. You must be the hardest working guy on staff, and lead by example. You have to love the course like it's your own property – but it's NOT your property, it belongs to the members and you must never forget that.

At Michigan State University, I learned all about soil profiles, turfgrass physiology, pesticide applications, and just about every aspect of golf course management with the exception of one glaring omission: balancing one's

life with "the job."

At times I feel like my standards are higher than the expectations of my membership, and most certainly my budget. It's tough to reconcile the difference sometimes. If I want something done outside my budgetary constraints, I end up doing it myself on my own time. It's a curse to pursue this level of perfectionism, but

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it drives me almost as certainly as it does for many of my peers. I love hard work, getting dirty, and going home with the scars to prove it. I love seeing the finished product. I like being proactive, not reactive. It becomes an addiction over time.

But this level of commitment to the job comes with a high cost. I have missed birthday celebrations, weekend trips up north, weddings, barbecues, and sporting events because the course called to me louder than my family. Other times I came home so tired, I was virtually useless around the house. This loss of balance catches up to you over time, wears on you, wears harder on those around you, and eventually it forces you to take notice that something's missing.

A couple weeks ago, a phrase popped into my head and has stuck with me ever since: "Don't blame the job for your own personal shortcom-

ings. It all comes down to personal choices and making time for the things that really matter."

Do I really need to be here 15 hours a day, essentially watching the grass grow at times? I have two young daughters at home, and they need their father more than the golf course (needs me) at 6 p.m. on a Sunday. There is only so much I can do out here, anyway. I am not Superman. I have limitations, both physical and mental. I am no good to anyone worn down, tired, and mentally fatigued.

If you find yourself nodding your head in agreement, then my advice is to find a way to balance your life.

Make it work. Find the time, and make the time. Commit to a life outside of the golf course. Find a hobby, and one that both you and your family can all enjoy. The course will still be there tomorrow, and young kids grow like weeds. Blink and you'll find yourself scratching your head wondering where all that time went.

I'm certainly not advocating for you to abandon your responsibilities at work, rather to encourage you to examine how you choose to budget your time. They don't teach you this stuff in school. It's all right to have lofty goals, and to continue that endless pursuit of perfection, but every man must know his limits.

Are you willing to pay that high of a price?

Sometimes there is a cost for trying to be too super. **GCI**

Adam Garr's Plum Hollow maintenance blog is at bit.ly/N8uV9M