



## WHAT'S IN YOUR BUCKET?

**A**s Eleanor Roosevelt so eloquently stated: "The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for a newer and richer experience." She makes a good point: Life is about new experiences, and if you're at some point you're going to want something new, which probably means you're going to think, "I want to do the set-up for a big tournament."

It's only natural. For superintendents, preparing a course for the best players in the world and national TV is the top rung of the ladder. Our Super Bowl. Having been involved in prepping dozens of courses for USGA events, I can't tell you how many times I'm asked, "What is it like to host a big event?" Which is inevitably followed by: "Do you think I could do it?"

The question no one ever asks is, "Do you think I should do it?" Which makes sense because when a club is in the running to host an event the super doesn't usually get a vote. You may know where all the bodies are buried, but trust me, if your place lands a major tournament, job No. 1 is keeping those bodies deep underground.

So your course could be hosting something bigger than the county championship. What will you get out of it? I'll start with the positives:

**PRESTIGE.** You're in the spotlight: the pros, crowds, dignitaries from Presidents to movie stars. A televised event puts your course (and, therefore, you) in front of millions of viewers worldwide. Maybe even Johnny Miller! If that's not enough pressure, telecasts today are high-definition. You must be on top of your game from the first moment.

**UNDER PRESSURE.** The event excitement and the anticipation of having the world's best players critique your work. This is pressure, but pressure is a

privilege. Can you deliver? This is much different than your low-handicap members asking for faster greens. Do the job here and your agronomic status rockets.

For superintendents, preparing a course for the **best players** in the world and national TV is the top rung of the ladder.

**THE ABILITY TO UPGRADE.** Whether it's the club paying or the host organization, expect to see money. It could be a new irrigation system, putting green or bunker renovations, maybe architectural and facility enhancements. You'll employ the newest technology in our industry – new turfgrasses, moisture sensors, the latest whatever! Your knowledge base will increase dramatically.

**NEW STAFF.** You'll recruit and develop a well-trained and organized staff, bringing in youth and energy that energizes everyone. This new attitude will serve the event and the course long afterward.

**YOUR CAREER.** Do a good job – years of planning, execution and agronomics; coordinating members, vendors, guests, volunteers and tournament staff; taking your club to the next level – and you are a hero. It's an accomplishment, and a feeling, that will never leave you.

And now the negatives:

**STUFF HAPPENS.** Do the best job possible and there are still two elements over which you have no control: weather and people. I've seen both devastate superintendents, their staffs, their courses. When everything is going according to plan, the weather shoves it

right back in your face. If it's not rain or a micro-burst, it's unbearable heat and humidity, high winds throwing debris everywhere, tornados, waves crashing across the 18th fairway (think Pebble Beach) or even the occasional earthquake. And just when everything is back together and play is about to resume, it happens all over again. And this is just inside the ropes: Don't forget parking areas, maintenance and vendor roadways, gallery routes, bus stops and most important the trail to the merchandise tent. Followed by the television folks running amuck in golf carts across the golf course you just repaired. Then there is the potential for vandalism, protests against toxic products, security for high-profile visitors, plane crashes, assassination attempts and bus drivers going on strike.

**FAMILY TIME.** No, I don't mean sharing the experience with loved ones. I mean the lonely hours away from them. Is it any wonder the divorce rate among superintendents is high? This applies to your staff, as well.

**THE MERRY-GO-ROUND.** While working on this year's event, you are preparing for next year and the one after that. Rare is the opportunity to step back and enjoy what you're doing and what you've done.

**YOUR HEALTH SUFFERS.** Lack of sleep, poor dietary habits, no exercise, stress, pressure. Living on coffee, doughnuts and Advil takes its toll. And if the event is a bust you become a leper: Everyone you thought was on your side is now treating you like an infectious disease.

I'm not saying the chance to work on a big golf event isn't fun. It is, as well as challenging, maddening, elating, spirit-crushing and the ultimate rush. All I can suggest is you know what you're getting into as early as possible. **GCI**