

The Microbial BioFungicide That Controls Dollar Spot



DOLLAR SPOT PROGRAM at 3 disease levels		
Disease Level	Rate per 1000 sq. ft.	Application Interval
LOW when light disease symptoms are evident or when conditions suggest a likely occurrence	20 oz.	14 days
MODERATE when significant disease pressure becomes evident	20 oz.	7 days
HIGH when high disease pressure becomes evident	20 oz.	3 - 4 days

University Research shows that EcoGuard Effectively Controls Dollar Spot, and aids in the Suppression of Brown Patch and Anthracnose

Golf project report

The scorecard for 2003 course construction and closings is final, and according to the National Golf Foundation (NGF), a combination of reduced course openings (18-hole equivalent) and higher course closings result in a net gain of just 125.5 18-hole equivalent courses for the year, by far the lowest gain in the past decade. On an 18-hole equivalent basis, the nation's total course supply remains at about 15,000 courses.

As of its January 19, 2004, Golf Project Summary Report, NGF says 370 courses are proposed, of which 96 would be 9-hole courses, and 274 would be 18-hole courses.

A total of 429 courses are in the planning stage. Of that, 136 are to be 9-hole and 293 would be 18-hole courses.

Courses under construction total 413, with 183 being 9-hole and 230 are 18-hole.

Three new 18-hole courses opened in the first few weeks of 2004. GCN

1993-2003 Course Openings/Closings (18-hole equivalents)

	Open	Closed	Change
1993	262.5	20.5	+242.0
1994	262.5	14.5	+248.0
1995	336.0	27.0	+309.0
1996	319.5	33.5	+286.0
1997	316.0	31.0	+285.0
1998	327.5	23.0	+304.5
1999	375.5	23.0	+352.5
2000	398.5	23.0	+375.5
2001	284.0	24.0	+260.0
2002	220.0	47.0	+173.0
2003	171.0	43.5	+127.5
Total	3,273	310	+2,963

Source: National Golf Foundation

U.S. Course Supply Year-End 2003 (18-hole equivalents)

	Daily Fee	Municipal	Private	Total
Regulation	7,429	1,972.5	4,150.0	13,551.5
Executive	505.0	119.0	105.5	729.5
Par 3	375.5	103.5	67.0	546.0
Total	8,309.5	2,195.0	4,322.5	14,827.0

Top 10 States for 2003 Openings

	Public	Private	Total
Florida	10.0	5.5	15.5
Texas	9.5	4.5	14.0
Arizona	4.0	5.0	9.0
Wisconsin	8.0	1.0	9.0
California	4.5	2.5	7.0
Minnesota	6.0	1.0	7.0
Virginia	4.5	1.5	6.0
New York	4.5	1.0	5.5
Indiana	3.0	2.0	5.0
Kentucky	5.0	0.0	5.0



2003 Golf Course Year-End Scorecard (18-hole equivalents)

	Openings			Under Construction			In Planning			Proposed		
	New	Expansion	Total	New	Expansion	Total	New	Expansion	Total	New	Expansion	Total
Daily Fee	78.5	32.5	111.0	176.5	52.0	228.5	239.5	31.0	270.5	221.5	29.0	250.5
Municipal	12.0	4.0	16.0	24.0	5.0	29.0	42.5	6.0	48.5	41.0	6.0	47.0
Private	34.5	9.5	44.0	56.5	13.5	70.0	51.0	9.0	60.0	17.0	8.0	25.0
Total	125.0	46.0	171.0	257.0	70.5	327.5	333.0	46.0	379.0	279.5	43.0	322.5

Your master plan

Golf course renovations can follow natural disasters that damage the courses, or start with an owner's commitment to maintaining a course in "tip top" shape. One sign of a well-run course is having a long-term Master Plan in place to anticipate the improvements needed to stay current in the marketplace, and where and how to invest wisely to meet long-term goals.

Some clubs don't recognize a pattern of declining interest in their courses early enough, making it difficult to catch up. Unlike buildings, where shifting foundations or leaky roofs are painfully obvious, golf course problems often are overlooked. Some think golf courses are "natural" and take care of themselves. And clubs that have invested substantially in the past may mistakenly believe that the course is "set for life." In many cases the superintendent actually masks underlying problems by keeping the existing course in such great shape!

The solution is a master plan created with the help of a golf course architect. You can find an architect experienced in

the superintendent is spending more time fixing the course than maintaining it.

What should you expect from the architect? You'll receive a letter of agreement detailing the services and owner responsibilities. The course may designate its superintendent as its key representative in working with the architect, but at a minimum, you will need to be involved and to start the process by obtaining information required for design, including:

- A recent scale aerial photograph, a topography map and property lines, showing locations of existing buildings, trees, rights-of-ways, easements and any encroachments
- Utility information, including existing and planned utility lines, both above and below grade
- Environmental information, including wetlands and floodplains
- Testing of natural conditions, including soil tests for lakes and subsurface rock

From there, the golf course architect will guide a sequential process with input and approvals by you, your green committee, pro and general manager.

tive plan – the beautiful colored plan that you often see in the clubhouse. While someone is guaranteed to comment at this stage, "They hung the master plan, because they couldn't find the architect," the plan should incorporate the features your club desires most.

Some clubs stop the process here, wanting only to get an idea of what might be possible "someday." But any course serious about improvements should go further and plunge into a complete renovation, or set the stage for long-term improvements by completing a full master plan, which should provide:

- Written descriptions of proposed changes, with reasons and benefits. A solid master plan helps prevent whimsical changes being made by each new greens committee
- A phasing plan with renovation programs ranging from one to 10 years. This plan details which and how many improvements should be undertaken. This is usually driven by most pressing need, but these improvements can be dictated by construction efficiency. Most phasing plans identify limited projects the superintendent can do while waiting for big projects to be funded. This work can include extending cart paths, planting trees, creating turf nurseries and landscape areas, and even providing "permanent" temporary greens for use when other greens are out of play.

Superintendents gain peace of mind when they can fix the most pressing needs, knowing the work fits within the final configuration of a particular hole.

- Most architects estimate construction costs using area or volume estimates and recent unit pricing from similar projects. However, pricing will be affected by the architect you retain, the scope of work and amount of work to be handled in-house.

To sell the master plan requires a club presentation with the involvement of key club members, the superintendent and the architect. With club approval of the master plan and with financing in place, construction can begin. The superintendent is typically even more involved at this point as the club's daily on-site representative working closely with the architect and builder. Renovating a course is a great opportunity that no superintendent should pass up. GCN

'Some clubs don't recognize the pattern of declining interest in their courses early enough, making it difficult to catch up. Unlike buildings, where shifting foundations and leaky roofs are painfully obvious, golf course problems are often overlooked.'

golf course renovations by contacting the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGA) by phoning 312/372-7090, or on the Web at asgca.org, but choose carefully. Each ASGCA member offers unique design skills that might be important for your course. Developing a master plan means entering into a long-term relationship, so finding and sticking with the right architect is good business.

If you do not have a master plan, the time to start one is now. A master plan is more than a good idea. Cosmetic and/or playability upgrades may already be necessary if your tees sheets and membership lists aren't full, if you can't raise dues or fees, if you can't attract new members or players, and if guest players hear comments like, "This course was great in it's heyday." A master plan also is overdue if

Before design can begin, the architect will evaluate your site, goals, schedule, construction options and budget. He will determine if specialized consultants need to be added to the team.

In the preliminary planning phase, the architect will present a schematic re-routing study, if applicable. Next comes the preliminary feature design study, which illustrates the proposed feature designs and configurations of tees, greens, fairways, lakes, hazards and proposed improvements to drainage, cart paths, grassing and landscaping. The architect also may depict the clubhouse, maintenance, parking and entry areas, but he or she is usually not responsible to design these features.

You'll likely go through several plan revisions before the greens committee approves it. Approval leads to the illustra-



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Jack Brennan founded Paladin Golf Marketing, Plant City, Fla., in 1989 to help golf course owners and managers market their courses more effectively. He can be reached at jackbrennan@ij.net.

Superintendent as marketer

Successful courses today require agronomic, management and marketing functions. Some courses still do not understand the need for marketing, but an increasing number of public and even some private courses are putting more emphasis on marketing for several reasons. Competition has increased among courses in any given locality. Golfers, like any other consumer group, have become much more demanding. And more courses now depend on revenue streams beyond the game itself.

Having said that, the essential product is still having a course that can command the necessary club and greens fees. To produce a quality course — agronomics and management — the superintendent and general manager must negotiate a happy medium between “I need this” and “We can’t afford that.” Once they arrive at a happy medium, then the marketing plan determines how to drive new and incremental business. Reaching the next level of success takes more than a written plan — the owner, general manager, superintendent, pro and sales team have to execute the marketing plan together.

In my consulting work, the owner hires me. Typically, the next meeting will be with the general manager. Then I meet with sales. Lastly, I meet the superintendent. Sometimes meetings with the superintendents must be delayed because they have to release crews before they can take time, but about 50 percent of superintendents do not care to take part in the meetings at all.

Even though about half of all superintendents want to pigeonhole themselves in their department, I still request that they participate in the discussions and planning. Superintendent participation is important because he or she is responsible for producing the end product that is central to the marketing plan. Put another way, a superintendent’s job is to produce the right product, and having the right product is essential if the marketing effort is to be effective.

This connection between the product and marketing strategy can be overlooked. To many people, marketing is little more than advertising and promotion. But this view ignores the fact that

golfers will shop until they find what they want. Many golf course owners, managers and superintendents could take a lesson from foreign car manufacturers like Honda and Toyota. These companies make quality and customer satisfaction the center of their marketing efforts by making sure that engineering and manufacturing communicate with target customers about the design and performance of different vehicle models.

My experience in working with superintendents shows that most have, or can quickly gain, a working knowledge of the advertising, sales and business side of the business. True, superintendents weren’t hired to market or sell, but in today’s competitive market, especially on public courses, a superintendent that sees how he or she can contribute to the course’s overall success is a major competitive advantage for that course in that marketplace. The smart superintendent also realizes that he or she has a vested interest in marketing, because the course’s revenue and profitability determine the maintenance budget, funding of improvements, and salary increases and bonuses.

Like it or not, the superintendent

uct will result in dissatisfied customers who will leave. Conversely, over-investment in terms of client expectations means lost profitability. The superintendent is uniquely positioned to match course conditions to customer expectations most efficiently — given sufficient budget, of course.

Superintendents who work in synch with the general manager, pro and sales staff will improve customer satisfaction. For example, I’m surprised at how many courses lack a master calendar. Without a master calendar sales may be selling an outing in late October when the course is going to be overseeded, which simply means you are going to have unhappy customers. If the customers know the course is being overseeded, then they can decide whether to play or not, and if they do, their expectations will be adjusted to the course conditions.

Better still, overseeding might be a good time for sales to schedule a charity marathon on the course. The course might discount their day rate for a charity, and thereby make a few thousand dollars when they might have made a few hundred. And the charity wins by getting a deep discount for

‘Superintendents weren’t hired to market or sell, but in today’s competitive market ... a superintendent that sees how he or she can contribute to the course’s overall success is a major competitive advantage.’

should be a member of the marketing team for a very practical reason. Marketing begins with the customer, and the superintendent can make sure the product matches the their expectations. I consulted with one course that only could get players to pay \$45 for a round, but the course was so beautiful the fee should have been \$90. In this situation, the maintenance costs were too high, but the situation can more easily be the reverse — who is willing to pay \$90 to play a \$45 course?

Effective marketing requires matching the product and price with the customer. On a premier course, a substandard prod-

their special cause.

The master calendar should be created jointly by the superintendent, general manager and sales staff, and updated frequently. It should include weddings, social outings, special events, tours, aeration and all major, non-emergency maintenance. The superintendent should train sales on their work and why it is done so they can explain this to golfers.

The key to marketing is to plan, set business goals, coordinate efforts and cooperate. With all this in mind, it’s easy to see why effective marketing requires the active participation of the superintendent. GCN



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USE READER SERVICE #16

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Managing budget pressure

THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST BUDGET CUTS IS A DETAILED OPERATING BUDGET TIED TO SPECIFIC COURSE MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

by
ROGER
STANLEY

GCN INTERVIEWS
TOMMY WITT,
SUPERINTENDENT OF
NORTHMOOR C.C.

Q What should superintendents facing budget pressures do?

TW: It's paramount to sit down with your employer to determine where the appropriate reductions should take place. Too many times, the default answer is that it should come from labor because labor is such a significant amount of the maintenance budget. The problem with that thinking is that when you reduce labor, it affects virtually every task on the course. If the superintendent can sit down with the appropriate parties, then he or she can recommend options that will have the least impact on the course. That's my ideal way to handle budget cuts.

Q Can't the superintendent just make the cuts?

TW: Certainly, the superintendent is the person most familiar with how budget reductions will impact the golf course. However, by involving as many members of the decision-making team as possible, then all appropriate players can have a buy-in and a familiarity with how the decisions will impact the golfing experience. For example, from the golf course maintenance perspective, if it is decided that the bunkers will be raked five days a week instead of seven because of budget reductions, then that's something I want the golf professional to be aware of, and I expect him to help support what we are doing on the course.

Years ago, I worked at a course where I was told to cut the annual operating budget by \$200,000. There was no negotiation and there was to be no mention of the budget reduction to the club owners

or the members. There was also no discussion about the possible impact on the course conditioning.

We made those reductions and we also kept the news to ourselves, but I know our members could not help but notice that many of the detailed tasks did not receive attention. Personally, I would rather deal above board and out in the open. If there are legitimate reasons for budget reductions, I think golfers are more than willing to accept the situation if they understand the problem. The superintendent shouldn't be left to take the blame for budget cuts and how they may affect the condition of the course.

Q Why is the maintenance budget a frequent target?

TW: In many instances, the superintendent manages the largest operating budget at a golf facility. Too often, it may be assumed that costs can be reduced without any significant impact to the course conditioning. Rarely do significant spending reductions come without some compromise in conditioning. In reality, when budget cuts at a facility are deemed necessary, then all facility operations should be scrutinized.

A second reason the superintendent's budget often is targeted for cuts is that the golf course maintenance operation might be viewed as a big spender rather than a revenue generator. In reality, the golf course superintendent maintains the facility's greatest asset, the golf course. The quality and conditioning of the golf course is directly related to and significantly influences revenue. Without the golf course very few golf shops or clubhouses or grills would survive. Significantly reducing the golf course operating

budget over an extended period of time only should be initiated following careful consideration. The condition of the golf course is tied directly to revenue generation for all departments of the facility.

Q Do prior maintenance budget cuts reinforce the perception that maintenance can be cut year after year?

TW: To an extent that's true. If you had to cut your pesticide purchases by 10 percent last year, and you were lucky and everything worked out fine with the weather and minor pest activity, then people begin to think that you should be able to do without that 10 percent again this year.

The fact is, if you are facing a budget cut this year as a one-time issue, then I would recommend you approach the solution differently than if this is the second or third consecutive year of managing under reduced spending. Successfully cutting corners or saving money one year does not mean even the most experienced and hard working superintendents can do that year after year.

Q What's your approach to meeting budget cuts?

TW: Most superintendents are good at making adjustments. As professionals, they also are best equipped to decide what they can and should do when budget reductions are mandated. My advice to superintendents is to consider all possible areas. You have to look at labor, but do so carefully. Rather than cutting people I would try to cut overtime. See if your people will agree to work 40 to 42 hours a week rather than 50-plus hours. Overtime is costly, but eliminating it or reducing it requires getting employees to

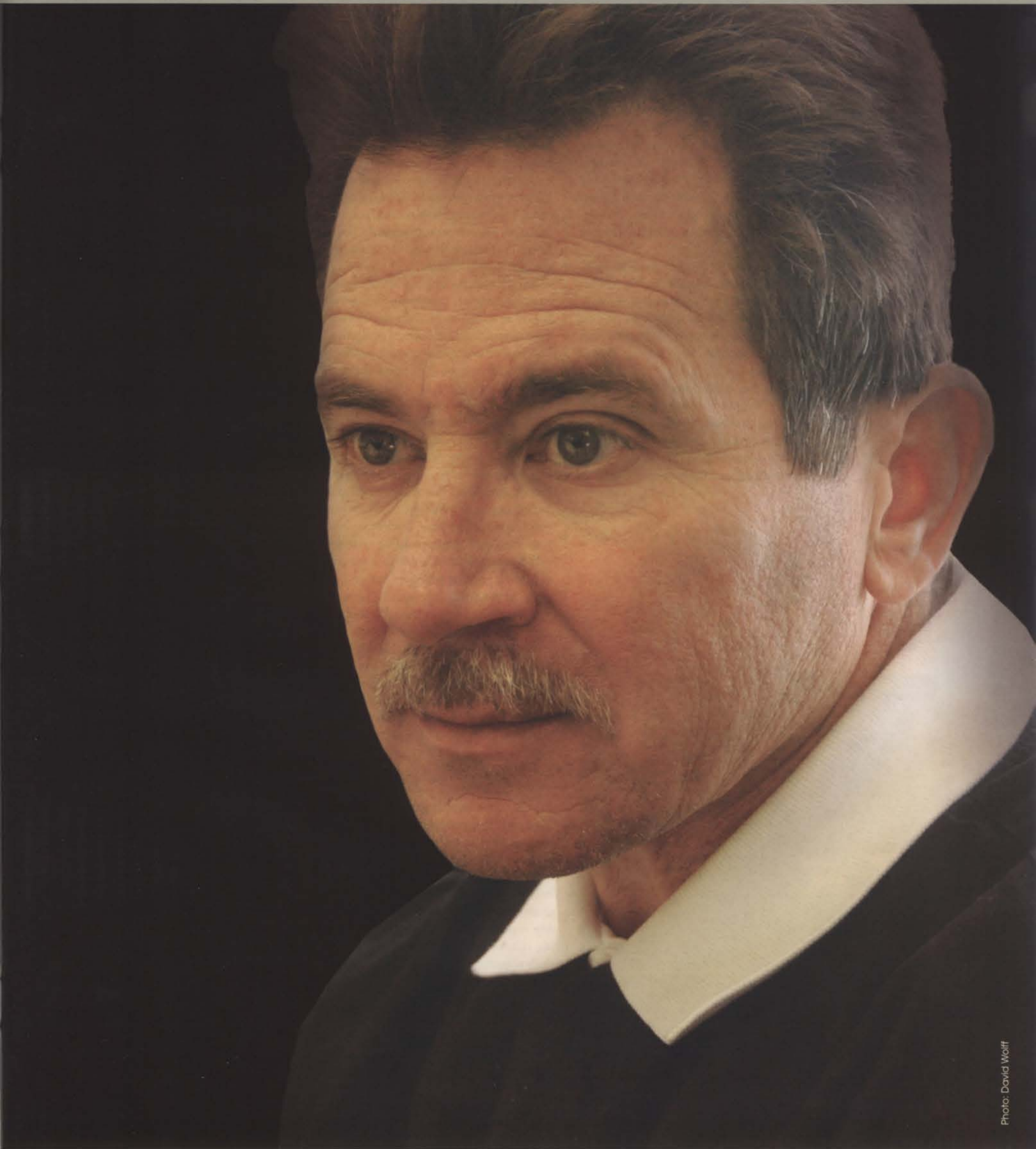


Photo: David Wolff

agree to stay on the job at what amounts to less pay for them.

Another area to consider is scheduling. Can you mow fairways two times per week instead of three, or three times instead of four times, depending on your standards and your budget? Can you start mowing earlier in the day to keep ahead of golfers and eliminate so much mower stopping and starting? Can you rake your bunkers five times a week instead of seven?

Trade-outs are another consideration. Take types of mowers, for example. Can you afford to have four or five employees mow the greens with walk-behind mowers, or save labor by having two men do the same task with riding greens mowers?

What about the potential trade-off in quality? Is your employer willing to accept that trade-out? The superintendent does not have to make this decision alone or he becomes responsible for it. Instead, he should educate the employer about the

plusses and minuses of trade-outs and come to an agreement on what to do. There are some things you can give up and things you cannot.

Purchasing also can make a difference in cost and financial terms. While I may have a number of friends and acquaintances who work for suppliers, and whom I may want to patronize, I feel it's my responsibility to negotiate the best packages and deals possible for my employer. Sometimes the best deal is price. Sometimes the best deal is service.

You should also look closely at your options and not get caught up in your old habits or preferences. You don't always have to buy the same color of equipment. Sharing or co-oping certain pieces of equipment may be an option for some courses.

Perhaps one option to reduce spending is to consider reductions in out-of-the-way areas. For example, if you allocate \$30,000 in tree work every year, can you forgo that work for a single year? But if you do this, then this work needs to be picked up in the budget the following year. Don't lower your budget without your employer understanding that you will do everything you can to keep conditions as good as possible, but at some point in time you will need to have the budget restored to its original amount to provide desired golfing conditions.

Many trade-offs are possible for a year or two, but to maintain your course for extended periods with less money each year gets a course headed in the wrong direction, even when the facility is being managed by the best of superintendents.

Q What is the single biggest budget mistake?

TW: It is essential that superintendents learn how to formulate a detailed operating budget. When we are able to write a budget that correlates with specific golf course maintenance standards, we have a better chance of matching budgets to course conditioning. I would suggest that any superintendent take whatever training is necessary to equip them with the skills required to become proficient in the budgeting process.

Q What's the biggest opportunity in budgeting?

TW: Opportunity is believing that the course is the lifeblood of the business; that the superintendent is the lifeblood of the course; and that the maintenance budget is the lifeblood of the superintendent.

The superintendent has to stand on principle. On my first job right out of Texas A&M, I worked for Stewart and Sherman Hunt, two of the most successful businesspeople in the country. My general manager was a retired four-star Air Force general. As a 24-year old superintendent, what chance did I have to deal with people with so much experience, charisma and power? But superintendents must prepare themselves to be able to communicate with the most experienced business executives. These are not skills that are taught in every golf course management program at universities across the country.

Today, I know that smart decisions on a golf course can't be made based on power and charisma. Smart decisions are made on the basis of setting goals, educating others and negotiating for what you need. As a superintendent, I've made it my personal responsibility to teach all my assistants to use this approach.

Q How do you approach the budgeting process?

TW: There are a lot of ways you can successfully budget in this industry, but I prefer doing a budget like a business plan. Managing a golf course has many similarities with managing other businesses. I place significant emphasis on identifying expenses as they relate to mission statements, goals and the maintenance standards.

I rely on detailed maintenance records, documentation and historical data. You also have to have an accounting system with integrity. Budgeting becomes increasingly difficult if numbers are shuffled from year to year. You have to have confidence in the numbers you are working with.

The final essential is an open and honest working relationship with management. In my experience, the closer this working relationship is, the easier budgeting will be — and budget cutting if that becomes necessary. GCN

Tommy Witt is the golf course superintendent at Northmoor Country Club, in Highland Park, Ill. Witt has been a superintendent for 25 years and is a past president of GCSAA. He can be reached at TommyWitt@hotmail.com.



Photo: David Wolff

Superintendents should not allow themselves to take the blame for budget cuts, Witt says.

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*source: USDA

USE READER SERVICE #17



by DAVID WOLFF

The career of even a distinguished superintendent like Gary Grigg, CGCS, can be abruptly changed in a matter of minutes. At age 50, Grigg had been a successful golf course superintendent for more than 23 years and was on the board of directors of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

Five years into the job, Grigg had transformed a barren piece of land into a *Golf Digest* Top 100 course. But when the owner turned the facility over to a management company, Grigg was informed that his pay exceeded the company's acceptable salary scale. His option was to take a 50 percent pay cut or resign.

Despite his many contributions, Grigg says he was given no indication from management that a management company was being considered, or the changes that would mean. The lesson, he says, is that hard work and performance are not enough to ensure job security in the golf course business.

"I gave that course five years of blood, sweat and tears and made it a first class

facility," he says. "I supervised construction, grew in the course and developed a maintenance program. But the job of a management company is to save money and it's easier to just promote the assistant."

Fortunately, Grigg says his story had a silver lining. Using the many industry contacts he had built up over the years, he found a better superintendent position and spent another 10 years in the profession. Along the way he earned the Master Greenskeeper distinction, became president of the GCSAA, and eventually started his own business.

"Getting fired isn't always bad news," Grigg says, "but it is all too common for superintendents in today's market."

In a December 2003 *Golf Course News* online survey, 37 percent of superintendents reported they have been terminated or left a position because of technical performance issues, budgetary changes or personality/political reasons (see page 11). Of all causes, personality/political was cited as the most common reason, by 23 percent of the respondents.

How are you doing and how do you know?

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