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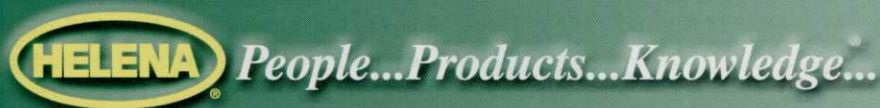
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PLAYING FOR RESPECT

Golf isn't a sport that's easy to learn or perfect. But golf is our job, and many times we forget it's also a sport to be enjoyed.

Generally, golfers don't like to hear what we have to say when it comes to "the why" behind our maintenance practices. The words "aerification" and "topdressing" almost always are met with scowls and frowns. I can see it from their point of view. If I walked into a doctor's office and had a doctor explain the intricacies of brain surgery to me, I'd have a certain look on my face, too.

I have, however, noticed a difference in golfer attitude when another skilled golfer describes maintenance practices compared to just a "turf guy." Golfers tend to trust other golfers – especially good golfers. I've had the privilege of working with assistants who also are very good golfers. I have to admit, I'm not that bad – I have a 7.9 USGA handicap and try to play often – even if it's not as much as I would like.

I've witnessed golfers react to hearing maintenance explanations from assistants who are excellent players compared to them. It just seems more palatable coming from them. The golfers seem to lose the blank stare and better understand the topic because they're hearing it from someone they respect as a golfer. Superintendents who are good at golf tend to garner more respect from those low handicappers – usually the golfers who tend to complain the most. Our respect

should be based on education, experience and past accomplishments, but sometimes it's not. It's not right or fair, but more times than not, it's the truth.

This doesn't mean all superintendents must be good at golf. It's not a requirement for success; it's just something to consider.

There are benefits to being seen practicing, playing and enjoying golf. Golfers who see you playing a round or practicing on the driving range might say to themselves, "Well, if he plays, he must know the greens are slower than normal or the bunkers are hard. Maybe there's a reason for this." It helps golfers accept the conditions based on their mindset that you might actually know what you're talking about because you have a golf club in your hand. This isn't right, but I've seen it many times.

So, how do you change golfers' perceptions if you don't like the game, you're too busy or your skills aren't up to par? Not liking the game usually isn't an excuse – almost all of us enjoy the game, that's what attracted us to this profession.

Some say, "I don't play golf because I see too many things that need to be done and can't concentrate." That's baloney. If this truly worries you, use this time as an opportunity to see the course. Take a small notepad and clip it to the golf cart steering wheel or put it in your pocket. How many of us walk our courses regularly? Take notes as you play. If you hit the ball like me, you'll see parts of the course you'd never see from your cart. It gives

you a chance to evaluate the course the from a golfer's view. I always called a round the "on-course evaluation of playing conditions." I don't get to do that as much I would like, but it's worthwhile.

To address the not-so-good golfer excuse, you'll have to practice. If you're worried about being seen at your home course, hit a couple buckets of balls at a range. You're going to have to work to get better.

Next, talk to your counterparts in the golf shop. I've been lucky to have great relationships with the assistant golf professionals I've worked with, and there's a reason they're in such a position – they're good teachers. Ask them for a few pointers. Have them follow you out to the range for a five-minute evaluation. A former golf pro used to yell at me to quit lifting my head as he drove by the driving range tee. Putt a couple times on the pro shop carpet and ask them what they think.

A great side effect of these interactions is strengthening the relationship between the maintenance and pro shop staffs, which benefits the entire organization.

Networking is another benefit of playing golf. Play in your chapter and state events whenever you can. You don't have to sign up in the championship flight. Just get out there and play. These events almost always are organized for those who want to compete and those who just want to play. I've even started signing up for the scramble portion so I could meet others or relax and have a good time with people I knew.

As an assistant, many of my friends were other assistants and superintendents. What a better way to build friendships and meet more people than playing each other's courses. We would rotate between courses every month and play. It's fun, relaxing and you also might learn something you can take back to your course.

You don't have to be a good golfer to be a good superintendent, but it won't hurt to try. This is one of those situations that will only benefit you in the long run. Besides, we should all be able to enjoy the place we give so much of our time, sweat and blood. We should enjoy the fruits of our labor, so get out there and play golf. **GCI**



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BUNKER LINER LOW-DOWN

I was surprised by two things on my first golf course construction project in 1977. The first was the amount of hand labor required to prepare a good seedbed over 160 acres. (I figured it would be done mechanically.) The second was that sand bunkers were built simply by edging out a shaped area, draining it and adding sand. Intuitively, I thought there would have to be a barrier between the sand and soil. Now, most of the golf world seems to agree.

A decade ago, liners were in the experimental stage. With use, they morphed into an expensive addition to bunkers at upper-level clubs. A few years ago, they became standard items on bid sheets, but were often eliminated if cost cutting was required. They're filtering down to just about all courses now, trading some initial cost for the benefits of easier, long-term maintenance and consistency.

I've seen many other homemade attempts at bunker liners during the past 25 years, including using PVC lake liner, cheap clear plastic from Home Depot and a host of other materials. One of the earliest widely recognized "improved bunker" techniques was the Billy Bunker, named after the former Augusta National superintendent Billy Fuller. He pioneered using a gravel blanket layer, geotextile fabric and using more drain tiles. His method has worked and has

proponents, even though the use of a gravel base never became widespread, probably because of initial costs.

There's no permanent infrastructure on a golf course – greens, tees and irrigation systems need rebuilding, so we should expect that for bunkers, too.

Many manufacturers jumped into the liner fray. Early products had some durability and technical problems, and each maker has released newer versions to address those problems. They're still a relatively new product, so long-term implications are unknown. However, in my experience, bunker liners are worth installing, despite the initial cost.

Unlined bunkers need sand replacement as soon as three to five years, but using liners approximately doubles that cycle to seven to 10 years. There's no permanent infrastructure on a golf course – greens, tees and irrigation systems need rebuilding, so we should expect that for bunkers, too. Superintendents who've been using them the longest report liners reduce, but don't eliminate, washing and soil contamination in sand bunkers. Overall, their maintenance regimens and budgets benefit.

There are two basic groups of bunker liners – fabrics and hard surfaces/soil binders.

Fabric liners include SandMat, SandDam and Sand Trapper. All are similar and have evolved and improved based on early usage; notably, early versions weren't durable. Those poor results led to the introduction of better grades of fabric. Recent usage shows the newest grades do much better for only a slight additional cost. The manufacturers

added better fastening systems and edge treatments that improve performance.

Installation costs about \$1.25 to \$1.50 per square foot. Some courses attempt to save money by placing liners only on slopes prone to washing. However, sand contamination comes from the top and bottom of the bunkers, so I recommend complete lining. On a current bunker project, we're using the highest grade liner on the steeper slopes and a mid-grade near the bottoms to help save money.

Disadvantages include the need to hand-rake bunkers to avoid pulling up the fabric. Some superintendents use mechanical rakes on the flatter portions (minus the cutting bar), but most don't take the chance. They figure faster travel time between bunkers in a utility vehicle and avoiding liner repair more than offsets the additional hand-raking labor.

Hard liners/soil binders evolved similarly. Early versions included products such as Bunker Guard, which became so popular it was difficult to get this product on site. Newer products include Klingstone and Sportcrete. The hard surface should be superior to fabric liners, but placing any hard material on native soils leaves them prone to cracking, much like nonreinforced concrete.

Proponents of these materials counter they're easier to repair than fabric liners. Advantages also include machine bunker rake use and preventing golfers from straining a wrist muscle if the club snags in a fold of material. Installation costs about \$2.50 to \$3.00 per square foot, which might be the biggest reason fabric liners are seemingly the more popular choice right now.

So, which is right for your course? I've used them all with good results, and I'm still monitoring the long-term effects. Visit with other superintendents in your area to see how their products are working in similar climates and soils and experiment with a few bunkers before making a decision. In any case, you'll find the long-term costs of using liners to be equal to or lower than the cost of not using them initially. And you'll have a better bunker. **GCI**



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LIFE'S NATURAL ORDER

At each of the dozens of workshops I've presented to GCSAA members during the past 10 years, I've asked attendees to prioritize the following five elements that drive life's course (in alphabetical order): career, country, family, God and self. Not surprisingly, the responses I've received through the years have been inconsistent. Basically, each of the five elements has been placed from first to last within the varied responses received from workshop attendees. Judging where these elements fit within your life's plan is more than a game. It's a prudent exercise to identify the sequencing of priorities that will best ensure your life's effectiveness.

After reviewing attendees' responses to this line of inquiry for many years and applying my judgment, I've determined the optimum sequencing of life's developmental building blocks to best ensure living beings will have their best opportunity to succeed in and enjoy life. My sequencing, which follows, might surprise some, but I'll consider this writing a success if it makes readers think and evaluate their priorities as they plan the balance of their lives.

1. SELF

Less than one attendee in 20 throughout the years has placed self at the top of the priority list, primarily because attendees fail to identify with the focus of their self-examination. Mistakenly, the attendees think self is meant to identify with the amount of attention people give themselves before others. Admittedly, it would be selfish for parents to think of themselves before their children, teachers before their pupils or employers before their employees. If this is as far as one goes identifying with the concept of self, then rightfully so, self slides down the priority list.

But the focus of the inquiry isn't meant to measure one's attention to self vis-à-vis others. Instead, it's intended to measure to what degree a person is able to develop his being completely. Only an individual who

has committed to developing his life assets completely can become a truly effective parent, spouse, friend, citizen, employer, leader, etc. Those who fail to commit to developing their complete selves, deliberately or by default, are assured of living more frustrating lives than secure lives. Therefore, if one wants to leave this earth a better place than when he came to it (which is what should be a universal goal of mankind), become the best person/self possible during your lifetime.

Those who fail to commit to developing their complete selves ... are assured of living more frustrating lives than secure lives.

2. GOD

The reason why I position God (religion) second is because life is unfair and can throw debilitating curve balls at anyone any time. Left alone and to our own devices, we can fail and find ourselves without hope when traveling through life without spiritual guidance. We should look at spiritual guidance as a perpetual insurance policy that will ensure the steady light of hope will always be part of our lives. Belief in a spiritual being of our choosing is the most effective way to ensure development of one's self.

3. FAMILY

Focus now turns to the building block that sustains life – the family unit. Incomplete families, such as single-parent and dysfunctional families, fail society daily, which means parents have a responsibility (as the circumstances of life best allow) to each

other and society in general to procreate and raise children within enduring two-parent families. Broken families weaken the fiber of life. We too often forget that, as parents, we are the sole 24/7 models of life to our children. When we, as parents, are lax, lazy, late, disrespectful, loud, profane, argumentative and fail to hold ourselves accountable, so, too, our children will follow. Consequently, society suffers, and the family unit is weakened. We have a responsibility to guard the value of the family unit as life itself.

4. COUNTRY

The benefits realizable from the above three life values can be diminished only when the country isn't on course. Bad economies undermine business, including the disposable-dollar-dependent golf industry; political strife undermines confidence in the country; and government overspending cheats our grandchildren of secure financial futures. Accordingly, it's imperative American citizens be knowledgeable about, and participate in, government. Speak out, lead and vote. A weakened America undermines the lives and careers of every citizen.

5. CAREER

How many readers anticipated I would position career as the fifth and last element within life's natural order? This is because careers will have the best chance to flourish when the above four elements of life pave the way. Conversely, careers can lose ground only when life's order is left to chance.

FYI

The United States Marine Corps' long-standing motto of "God, country, corps" matches the sequencing presented above, allowing for the fact that corps is the equivalent of career and the two elements of self and family aren't included within this priority listing because they're embodied within the team concept of corps. Nothing will serve the golf industry's noble warriors better than adopting the credo of the country's most noble warriors. **GCI**

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EMPLOYEES: ASSETS NOT COSTS

For at least two decades, we've heard the phrase "employees are assets not costs." The phrase represents a significant shift in how employees are led, supervised and managed by world-class businesses, including golf courses.

For costs (fertilizer, pesticides, etc.), superintendents seek to determine the optimal quantity, always keeping in mind cost control. For assets (land, greens, machinery), which are investments, superintendents determine how to use them to get the greatest return. A mower, for example, does no good until it's used. It must be maintained and repaired to maximize the return on the investment.

Employees are quite different from other assets because they can think and feel, possess multiple talents and have other employment options. Superintendents must consider what it takes to get the greatest return from this asset.

How superintendents maintain a fleet of mowers has a considerable impact on the return on the club's investment. Similarly, how superintendents lead, supervise and manage employees has a significant impact on employee productivity and job satisfaction. Gaining significant return on employee productivity and satisfaction starts with superintendents' attitudes toward employees and permeates how they manage employees.

Here's a story relating to the idea of employees as assets. Several years ago, after a presentation at a nursery and greenhouse conference, a gentleman named George approached me and asked to tell his story. He had worked for a small landscape business for 23 years. That day, looking back at the 23 years, he determined he was a terrible employee. He took all of his vacation and sick leave whether he was sick or not. He did the minimum. His justification at the time was that everyone did the same because the owner/supervisor provided no clarity or feedback. Then he found a job with another small landscape business. This

owner/supervisor provided clear expectations, feedback, encouragement and support. This was the second time George had been encouraged to attend the conference. At the time, George said he worked hard, enjoyed what he was doing and believed he was an excellent employee.

George's productivity and job satisfaction were dramatically different when working for the two similar businesses. What's the difference? Obviously, George was older; however, few workers change their values, personality, motivation, etc., sufficiently to explain the difference, which, in this case, was the owner/supervisor. The first

	CONTROL FOCUSED	QUALITY FOCUSED
Employees are	A cost	An asset
Supervisor's role	To tell the employee what to do	To ensure the employee succeeds
Core value	Based on compliance	Based on fairness
Supervisor activities	Training, directing, reprimanding, discharging	The control-focused four plus coaching, mentoring, encouraging, rewarding, empowering, redirecting and holding accountable
Supervisor's informal name	Boss	Coach

owner/supervisor did little to manage his asset, George, and received little in return. The second owner/supervisor worked to manage, supervise and coach George, and his efforts were rewarded with an excellent employee.

This story and the phrase "employees are assets not costs" reflect a significant change in recommended practices for supervising and coaching employees. I call the old approach that viewed employees as costs the control-focused school of supervision. I call the newer approach that has emanated from the quality movement and excellent research about supervision, the quality-focused school of supervision. The table on this page compares the two approaches.

Every business, including the golf facility at which superintendents work, is in the process of moving from control focused to quality focused. It's a difficult but reward-

ing journey. The rewards are personal and financial for the owners/supervisors and the employees.

The following are the three pillars of a world-class, quality-focused human resource program:

- An organizational culture and a clearly articulated and continuously communicated business direction (vision, mission, core values) that's completely consistent with a quality-focused approach to employee management.
- A recruitment, selection and hiring program that attracts employees who have the competencies – knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, attitudes, behaviors – to succeed.
- A work environment in which the

attitudes and actions of each supervisor are consistent with, and built on, the business direction, organizational culture and quality-focused supervision. Each employee is viewed as a valuable asset with unique and beneficial talents and strengths. Each employee is provided the tools – training, quality assurance, coaching and feedback – that enable him to succeed.

The three pillars aren't independent. Golf course owners, superintendents and managers are responsible for developing an environment that inspires and motivates every member of the work force. This leads to superior productivity and extraordinary job satisfaction.

Establishing the aforementioned three pillars in a golf course environment isn't easy. Superintendents might need help like they do with other aspects of their job, such as turf management and equipment repair. **GCI**

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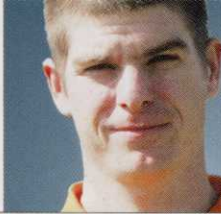
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ROLL WITH IT

Rollers play an important role in a superintendent's ability to provide a consistent, well-groomed playing surface. There are many different types of rollers, but when are certain ones used, and how important is it they're consistent?

Using the correct roller on a greensmower is important to the overall presentation of a green. We typically use two roller types on greens: smooth and Wiehle/grooved. Typically, smooth rollers are used after aerification, verticutting or when greens are "puffy." They allow us to smooth out the surface while minimizing scalping.

We generally use grooved rollers when turf conditions are optimal and we're not aggressive with maintenance practices. A grooved roller affects how aggressive the cutting unit is and should be used only at certain times of the year. When purchasing new greensmowers, be sure to include these types of rollers.

There are a few other important factors when it comes to rollers. The first is bearings, which play a key part in the construction of a roller. When bearings are loose or have end-play, they affect the height of cut. Always check them for consistency.

Also, you want to make sure to maintain bearings properly. Always grease the rollers after washing cutting units to assist pushing the water that could enter the bearing away from it. Make sure to clean and grease the fittings before and after greasing them to ensure contaminants don't enter the bearings. Don't overgrease bearings because this will cause dreaded grease streaks on the turf.

Another factor is how much runout rollers have. In the photo below, you'll see an example of measuring a roller's runout. Most manufacturers have around a 0.014 tolerance on runout. Check with the manufacturer. Most of the time they're within that specification, but always check them

upon receipt. If the roller isn't shipped to you within the manufacturer's spec, you can always replace it for a new one.

The picture below shows gauge blocks and a dial indicator being used to measure the runout by spinning the roller and recording the amount of difference on both ends. This is important when mowing greens below 0.140. The more differentiation in the roller the less consistent the green, which will result in slower green speeds and a mismatched cut. In some cases, rollers can be taken to a local machine shop and "trued up."

Finally, another important aspect of rollers comes when setting the height of cut. There are many schools of thought about setting the height of cut on a cutting unit, taking into account the runout of a roller. One method is to attach a height gauge to the cutting unit and spin the roller. Then set the height in the middle of the runout. A popular method is to set the height at the lowest point the roller travels. The reason for this is if the target height of cut is 0.110, the lowest the machine will cut at is 0.110. Setting the height in the middle of the runout will allow the cutting unit to drop below the target height and wouldn't give you the most consistent result.

Selecting rollers for fairways, rough and tees is a standard process. Normally, these cutting units are outfitted with grooved front rollers and solid back rollers. Because of the height of cut, you don't need to change these rollers unless you have lower heights of cut in which scalping becomes an issue. Some manufacturers offer spiral grooved rollers, which are more aggressive and typically used in rough mowing applications. These rollers work great at high heights of cut where you need to be aggressive.

Having the correct roller installed on a cutting unit is an important part of achieving the look you're after daily. If you're having scalping issues and using a grooved roller, switch to a solid one and see if it helps. Rollers are a huge part of any cutting unit, and having the correct one is half the battle. **GC1**



Gauge blocks and a dial indicator are used to measure runout by spinning a roller and recording the amount of difference on both ends. Photo: Stephen Tucker