

# A golf superintendent

## Deciding to go public

It used to be only golfers who concerned themselves with the private/public option. The almighty breaker of par would look upon his potential kingdom and reveal his allegiance to one or the other. In most cases, it was a dollars-and-cents decision: get a good deal, you go here; don't, and you go elsewhere.

That was the plight of the golfer. If he couldn't make ends meet as a member of a private club, he uprooted himself and went to bring about that clear financial conscience in the sky by defecting to the public course.

At that, some of the public layouts have made themselves a lucrative attraction to the golfer in the street. There are those courses that offer the potential "member" starting times, a place in a tournament atmosphere, and overall country club benefits — such as social events, club championships, member-guest tests, and the other scattered come-ons.

Therefore, it should not come as any shock that the golf course superintendent is viewing the catch-all effect of his profession in the same light as the man walking the fairways and setting his sights on a par-breaking round. The superintendent has to look at the light of his money-making life. And, from

certain examples of supers taking it upon themselves to think and act away from the accepted private sector, the public course looms as the equalizer in establishing some kind of protection for the man who is supposed to keep the grass green.

There has been a sort of unwritten rule that the best superintendent job is found in the private club environment. Obviously, the reputation of the club, its members, and so on must have much to do with the ensuing reputation of the superintendent. In other words, you work at a first-class club and you get first-class hurrahs.

But — and this is a big but — there is a mushrooming movement among golf course superintendents which breathes of a rebellion. The average super (that man who has 10 or more years of service behind him) believes he should have the same type of protection and job security as his peers in other related jobs. And for this reason, some superintendents are wending their way into public golf courses (including municipal layouts) where their talent is appreciated, rather than questioned.

The impetus for such a story as this is provided by one of the real contributors to the profession: a veteran private club super who suddenly has come to realize that he no longer

can survive under the whip of the country club set.

"I can't see me going to another private club," he said. "Sure I had my good years and years when the whole idea of superintendent, club manager, pro, and members getting together meant something to the well-being of the club. But I've discovered that I can't continue to maintain my interest in such an arrangement. If I ever take another job in this field, it will be at a public course."

Obviously, the good and bad of any relationship can be starred in the review of the golf superintendent's plight. What seems to have a gnawing grip on the super is his relationship with the people he serves.

Very common now among superintendents is the yen to go public instead of private. "I was sick and tired of having to respond to the questions of 400 members," one ex-private club super disclosed. "I would rather go to a smaller, no-name course and go about my business without taking interference from people who don't know what they're talking about. At the public course, the player just plays. That's the difference, as far as I'm concerned. I don't need anybody telling me what I should do at my job. I'm happy being left alone."

This column by Gerry Finn, sportswriter for the Springfield (Mass.) Union, originally appeared in the newsletter of the Golf Course Superintendents of New England.

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