

Forty-eight percent of the people polled in a recent *Golf Digest* magazine survey said that the superintendent is the most important person at a golf facility. Where did they take that poll? At a GCSAA convention? It gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling to think that flesh-and-bone golfers think that of superintendents, but actions speak louder than polls.

And actions show me that superintendents find themselves in the middle of a range of industry issues. It's time for a change of attitude on the part of owners, general managers, golf pros and golfers when it comes to dealing with superintendents.

By the same token, it's time for all superintendents to personify the leadership position conferred in that poll.

Rather than helping to set the standards at clubs, superintendents can be found in the middle of playing-condition debates between high handicappers and scratch golfers. Regardless of all the new equipment and super grasses, the rough can't be at two different heights or the greens at two different speeds on the same day.

The green committee or management team should evaluate the needs and desires of its customers and work with the superintendent to define what conditions he or she should manage. Then both sides know the expectations and goals of the programs. The superintendent's performance and the club's support is then realistically measured — instead of by the whims and politics of a new green chairman or general manager.

There's nothing for a superintendent like being in the middle of the beer budget and champagne taste paradox. Clubs want to be like Augusta, Winged Foot or Pebble Beach, but they don't have the money or special events that generate the volunteers and equipment to create those picture-perfect venues seen on television. If club management or members can't count and a superintendent can't educate them with facts and figures, there will be a lot of headaches over that no-win situation.

Superintendents could and should be lead-

Superintendents: Stuck in the Middle

BY JOEL JACKSON



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ers at their clubs regarding environmental issues. But instead they find themselves in a tug of war between what's legal, environmentally sound, and keeping the golf course green and manicured to the satisfaction of their employers.

Superintendents should explain the pros and cons of Integrated Plant Management (IPM) and Best Management Practices (BMPs), and clubs should understand that they are the standards of the future.

Superintendents naturally try to please those who control their destinies, but they are also responsible to the government agencies that regulate safety and environmental impacts under their control. Once again, superintendents can find themselves in the middle.

Superintendents should know when there is a problem at the club that could lead to a violation, which could mean a fine or even a lawsuit. Once aware of the problem, the club should take over and make sure that it's resolved.

But if a club ignores problems and hopes to escape detection, the pressure on superintendents is insidious. They know what needs to be done, but the club won't do it. I'd hate to place any employee under that kind of pressure if it ever came to a hearing or trial.

Superintendents shouldn't have to choose which side to please in any issue at a golf club. The club should have a mission statement with agreement on playing conditions, methods of operations, and regulatory compliance mandates.

Superintendents were not meant to be middlemen. After all, aren't they the most important people at a golf facility?

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