

**M**ark Riggs, the head pro at Country Club of Culpeper (Va.), believes superintendents have turf maintenance in their blood. He should know.

Riggs once aspired to be a superintendent and worked as a spray technician, irrigation technician and assistant superintendent.

But while climbing the ladder to become a head superintendent, Riggs realized he didn't have the agronomic instincts to tend turf with the best of them. He couldn't sense an onslaught of anthracnose like many superintendents can. "If you're not a person in tune with those things, you'll get way behind the eight ball," Riggs says.

Superintendents must look inside their crystal balls, Riggs realizes. They must be prognosticators of weather, disease and anything else on turf maintenance's often hidden horizon.

We've heard tale after tale of how superintendents and pros don't get along and don't respect each other's roles. But Riggs can't be clumped in that category. After getting a taste of golf course maintenance, Riggs knows better.

"They're not just out there mowing and watering," Riggs says of superintendents. "They're at the mercy of Mother Nature and in a very uncontrollable situation."

*Golfdom* recently polled superintendents on a variety of issues, many of which are featured in this month's *Golfdom Report*. One of the questions we asked superintendents was: How do you get along with your course's pro?

Not surprisingly, Charlie Fultz, superintendent of the Country Club of Culpeper, said he gets along "very well" with Riggs. "Charlie's clear at communicating what he needs, and I'm clear at communicating what I need," Riggs says, explaining the key to their relationship.

Every February, Fultz provides Riggs with a schedule of major maintenance projects for the upcoming season. "And I let him know about the tournament schedule so he doesn't plan maintenance projects during those times," Riggs says.

Riggs has been in the golf business for about 15 years and worked as a pro in Maryland for the first eight years. But Riggs aspired to play competitively on minitours to appease his competitive spirit and earn some money. To do so, however, Riggs knew he'd also need another income

## Been There, Done It — Won't Forget It

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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because the cash on tour might not be that lucrative, especially if he didn't win. Riggs moved to Florida, got a job on the maintenance staff at Broken Sound GC in Boca Raton and began to play competitively. At the golf course, he worked in the mornings and practiced in the afternoons.

"I definitely developed an interest in golf course maintenance, and I started taking turf classes through the Florida GCSA," Riggs says.

After one and a half years at Boca Raton, Riggs was promoted to assistant superintendent, a title he held for about a year. But he realized he'd hit his personal ceiling for golf course maintenance. When a head pro job came calling at a resort course in Naples, Fla., Riggs opted out of turf maintenance. "It would have been tough for me to get to the next level to be a superintendent like Charlie," he says.

Riggs is impressed with Fultz's uncanny ability to spot trouble before it arrives. One time, Riggs says Fultz came to him and told him the greens were in trouble. "I said to him, 'What do you mean? I just played the course yesterday, and the greens looked great,'" Riggs recalls. "But about two days later, the greens came down with a mild case of anthracnose."

It was like Radar O'Reilly hearing the choppers before anyone else could. Riggs was impressed with Fultz's flair for forecasting. "I look at Charlie and appreciate that he's at a level I can't achieve."

Riggs has been at Culpeper for three and a half years. In his career, he has seen pros and superintendents at other courses who don't get along. He's thankful that he and Fultz are colleagues on the same mission: the golf course's success.

Riggs doesn't have turf maintenance in his blood. But, in his brain, he knows how important it is to a course's overall operation.

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