

I love the PGA Tour's media campaign, "These Guys Are Good!" This series of somewhat self-indulgent promotions extols the golfing prowess of its members with clips of chips, putts, eagles and aces rolling into the cup from great distances and unbelievable lies.

Then there's the computer-enhanced vignette with David Toms lobbing wedges at his rooftop satellite dish and the balls rolling back to his feet though the gutters and downspout. All this is good-natured hype to affirm that in fact these guys are pretty darn good at what they do.

They are also lucky. I watched K. J. Choi pull his approach shot so far left during the Tampa Bay Classic that the gallery, the marshals and even the trees were ducking for cover. But as rub of the green would have it, Choi's ball "expertly" caromed off the cart path and ended up 10 to 12 feet from the pin. I don't think that highlight will be featured in the next promo clip.

You have to admit these guys are at least persistent when Bob Burns, No. 118 on the tour, goes low for four straight days to win the Disney Classic from a hard-charging Tiger Woods and rising star Chris DiMarco.

But these pros don't have anything on the unsung stars of the game, the superintendents. If we only had to go low on the greens for four days instead of a whole season, maybe we'd have more winning days, too.

While announcers are doing a little better job of mentioning superintendents by name at the end of broadcasts, I would love to see some footage of superintendents and their staffs in action doing some tournament prep or recovery during weather catastrophes. It would go a long way in educating the golfing public about what it takes to present those flawless conditions during tournament week, and why it might just not be possible to accomplish that 365 days a year.

Like the golf pros, superintendents perform incredible feats manipulating manpower and equipment in an intricate ballet of motion designed to produce near perfection when the curtain rises on the first tee

These Guys Are Good, Too

BY JOEL JACKSON



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time of round one of a tournament. Weeks and months of preparation by the maintenance staff precede that moment. Just as the pros practice their swings and shot-making endlessly, turf managers practice their turf grooming art over and over, getting more proficient with each attempt.

Like the pros, to be good is not always enough; sometimes you have to be lucky. Maybe the mechanic catches the hydraulic hose leak during routine maintenance. That's being good. But if it blows out in the middle of operating, maybe it happens on the back edge of the green. That's being lucky.

As for persistence, you won't find too many superintendents who don't embody the virtue. Just like those pros trying to make the top 125 on the money list, the superintendent ranks are filled with grinders who keep plugging away against the odds of meeting high expectations feeding on beer budgets.

The improbable birdies and eagles shown in the PGA Tour commercials are momentary fortunate perfection — one shot in one round of golf in a tournament. It begs the question of why we call these guys good when they are rarely so perfect. Conversely, one has to wonder why superintendents take so much heat if they also only momentarily reach total perfection on the golf course a few times during the season.

Day in and day out, superintendents provide good playing surfaces worldwide under a variety of conditions that require skill, persistence and even a little luck. Just remember — when the trophies are handed out, these guys are good, too.

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