

**P**sst . . . hey you . . . superintendent. Come here. I want to talk to you about something. Earlier this year, I attended a panel discussion during the National Golf Course Owners Association's annual meeting titled, "How Should Golf Course Owners Evaluate the Agronomic Condition of Their Courses?" The five-member panel featured some of turf's heavy-hitters, including Jim Snow, national director of the USGA Green Section, and Teri Yamada, national director of the Royal Canadian Golf Association Green Section.

I'm telling you about this 90-minute discussion because your name came up several times. And remember: It took place in front of a bunch of *owners*. Yes, your bosses were trying to get the dirt on you (no pun intended).

But there's good news: The panel members were sympathetic to your plight of maintaining turf in this wacky world of golfers with whopping expectations. In fact, most panel members, especially Snow, went to bat for you. He told the audience that you often do a tremendous job under difficult circumstances that are out of your control. Snow also hinted to owners that they should be careful not to blame you for problems that aren't your fault. "If you're not aware of water-quality problems like high sodium, you might not realize why the course is having problems — even though the superintendent is working his tail off," Snow said.

Yamada also took your side. She told owners that "an extraordinary number of superintendents have vague job descriptions." She urged owners to redefine your job descriptions and improve communication with you. "You need to meet with your superintendent on a regular basis, just as your green committee does," Yamada said.

USGA agronomist Bud White echoed Yamada's take, but he also said you need to do your part. White said owners and superintendents are rarely on the same page when it comes to expectations for golf course maintenance. He urged owners to sit down with you and have a heart-to-heart talk.

"Make sure your superintendent understands beyond a shadow of a doubt what your expectations and desires are because they go hand in hand," White said. "Then the superintendent should have the professionalism to come back to

## They Tried to Get the Dirt on You

BY LARRY AYLWARD



**BUT YOU CAME OFF  
LOOKING PRETTY  
GOOD DURING A  
PANEL DISCUSSION  
IN FRONT OF GOLF  
COURSE OWNERS**

you with a detailed budget on what it will take to produce the results you're looking for."

Panel members touched on other issues. Joe DiPaola, golf market manager for Syngenta Crop Protection, urged owners to consult you regularly about turf science. "Have superintendents review their agronomic plans with you," he stressed.

White warned owners not to overextend your capabilities, especially when it comes to expecting you to perform major tee and bunker renovations.

"Superintendents are not set up for the construction business — they're set up for the maintenance business," White said. "They won't do [renovations] as efficiently and probably not as well [as experienced builders]."

Snow stressed the importance of continuing education for you. He politely told owners to free up the cash so you can keep up with turf's rapidly changing times. "Superintendents should belong to local chapters and go to meetings," Snow said. "You should encourage them to do so."

While Snow offered his unwavering support for you, he didn't let you off the hook so easily. He told owners they should only hire superintendents who are team players.

"I'm sure that's what you want for your facility — someone who's willing to cooperate in every possible way, get the most bang for your buck and produce an excellent quality facility," Snow said. "If a superintendent is not a team player, there could be problems."

That's about it. I've told you just about everything that went down during the panel discussion. Overall, you came off looking pretty good.

But, as you know (and I'm sure owners would agree), you've always got to keep working on improving and learning — no matter what your profession. When you don't want to improve and learn anymore, it's time to get out.

*Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or [l aylward@advanstar.com](mailto:l aylward@advanstar.com).*