

Superintendent-owners are few and far between, and they are the only superintendents legitimately entitled to say, "It's my golf course." Any other superintendent who thinks of a course being his or her own is suffering from a common delusion that can prove costly in terms of mental health and continued employment.

I'm sorry to have to be the one to tell you, but it's not your golf course. It never was and never will be. All you own is the thankless responsibility of maintaining the course against all natural and manmade pressures that come with the complex piece of real estate you tend.

I know it's easy for you to feel as if you own the course, especially when you may have taken that chunk of land from being an underdeveloped tomato field to a newly minted tournament site. Maybe you lovingly planted hundreds of saplings that are now towering trees framing the golf holes, or perhaps you helped restore a Donald Ross masterpiece to its former glory. It may be true that without you, the course wouldn't look nearly as good as it does.

You reshaped the land with your blood, sweat and tears. You have left a mark on the landscape, and it's soul-satisfying. But you must keep one essential fact in mind: The excellent condition of the course may be your achievement, but it's not your golf course. It belongs to those who pay the bills.

You want proof? Check out the GCSAA's "On the Move" section, which is filled with the names of superintendents evicted from "their" golf courses.

That may be a cold-hearted observation in a profession where the quest for perfect playing conditions often drives superintendents to unbelievable heights of creativity. You find solutions to every challenge visited upon you, often in the face of forces outside your control.

I won't denigrate the effort that superintendents put into the courses they manage by saying, "It's just a job." But superintendents might endure less stress if they can maintain healthy perspectives about their relationships with courses.

It's *Not* Your Course After All

BY JOEL JACKSON



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It can be very stressful for a superintendent to have to choose between waging an agronomic war with overstressed turfgrass or waging a political war with club owners who don't understand that tournament golf conditions can't be sustained indefinitely.

Turf management is a special vocation, but it isn't a life or death issue unless you happen to be a putting green mowed unhealthily low to meet your club manager's idiotic demand for greens that roll 10 on the Stimpmeter every day without exception. That's an example of arrogance meeting agronomy head-on. Unfortunately, the winner of that argument is not always the superintendent, despite his background in agronomy. The ultimate losers are usually the golfers who now putt on dirt because the turf dies a horrible death.

Veteran superintendents are often so canonized and revered that when new management takes over, it may feel like it's playing second fiddle to the incumbent legend of the links. The worst thing a veteran superintendent can do then is to project the notion that it's "his" or "her" golf course. The survivors of this constant battle know when to be humble and diplomatic.

Innovative golf course architect Pete Dye once said the three most important things in golf course design were "drainage, drainage and drainage." When it comes to course maintenance, the three most important things are communication, communication and communication.

That's the best you can do in the face of unreasonable demands. Your bosses won't always listen or comply, but they don't have to. After all, it's *their* golf course.

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