

# He Teaches People to Treat Others with Respect

BY MARK LESLIE

**T**eam building, along with advanced detailed planning of course maintenance, are keystones to the learning curve for assistants working for Fred Biggers, the certified superintendent at 45-hole Wintergreen (Va.) Resort.

But some of his former pupils, more than a dozen who are head superintendents at their own courses now, would say that caring for employees as people more than workers is a subject of crucial significance that they learned from working with the 24-year veteran.

"Whenever I spoke with Fred, he always asked about my family, my children and me," says David Smallridge, certified superintendent of Sourwood Forest GC in Snow Camp, N.C. "This is where Fred holds my greatest respect."

"He made you feel as if you were an integral player," says Jim Matthews, superintendent of Greenville (S.C.) CC's Chanticleer Course, where he worked for Biggers. "He taught me to treat everyone as an individual and with respect, and to try to bring out the best from within each person, whether [that person] is an assistant superintendent or on the crew."

Because of his influence, Biggers is a recipient of *Golfdom's* Keepers of the Green Award, sponsored by Floratine Products, for being one of the nation's best superintendents/mentors. He was nominated for the award by Bill Appel, president of Growth Enhancer, a Floratine distributor in Roanoke, Va.

Biggers says he wants employees who have integrity and a positive attitude, and who are friendly and respect their co-workers. "Employees are all valuable people, and if you are not treating them like that, you are not doing your profession justice," he says.

At the same time, Matthews, Smallridge and the others who worked with Biggers at the 36-hole Greenville CC from 1988 to

April 1999 or at Wintergreen Resort since then have received a master tutorial in the management end of golf course maintenance.

"A lot of guys get out of school, and they think they know everything they need to know," says Biggers, a Clemson University graduate who has served as president of the Carolinas GCSA and South Carolina Turfgrass Foundation, and as vice president of the Virginia Turfgrass Foundation since 2001. "They learn they know a little bit and that it's totally different when the rubber meets the road. They realize they are the ones who have to drive the backhoes out there, dig up the leaks and fix them."

Since his current and previous jobs were at multiple-course facilities, Biggers has found himself in a position to mentor others. What does he teach? Work ethic, organization and planning. "I want my superintendents to be out on the course, either working or coordinating work," he says.

Meanwhile, Biggers involves his assistants in drafting a detailed work plan and budgeting, establishing a schedule for the next year and gathering the information to make the plan work, whether it is soil testing, testing the roughs or selecting different varieties of grass to use.

"We're preparing them for the job they will have to do when they get their own golf courses," Biggers says. ■

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**Fred Biggers**  
Certified superintendent  
of Wintergreen (Va.) Resort

