

I was recently leafing through an issue of the “old” *Golfdom* magazine from the 1930s when I came across an article about the “revolutionary” new practice of fairway irrigation. At the time, it was bad news for the guy who used to drive the water truck, but it was clearly good news for everyone else.

The article got me thinking about the evolution of golf course management and our remarkable tradition of progress and growth. Agronomic science, technology, formal education, compensation and recognition are all light years beyond what was available when that old article was written.

Think about this: a golf pro from 1935 could climb into a time machine, arrive in 2003 and still be able to recognize and use today’s versions of the basic tools of his trade — sticks and balls (and cash registers, I guess). But a greenkeeper of that era magically teleported to today would be absolutely baffled by the products and practices we use now. In short, time has been very good to this profession overall.

But time has also eroded certain traditions, and that is worrisome. For example, I’ve heard many veteran superintendents express concern that young people entering the profession now have inflated expectations and little patience for “paying their dues.”

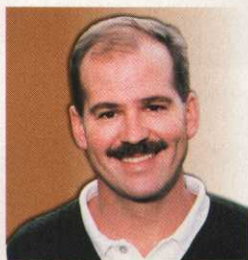
I think there’s more to this than some old guys whining about how they had it tougher when they came up. The promise of a quick move into a head superintendent’s job seems to be a commonly held belief among many young folks coming into the business.

The problem with this fast-track mentality is that it bypasses one of the most valuable and time-honored traditions of our industry: apprenticeship and mentoring. In short, we need to remind those enthusiastic and aggressive young turfheads that they will ultimately be more successful and happier if they invest a few early career years to learn what no school can ever teach.

Mentoring is a two-way street. The young person has to have the patience and

Mentors Play Vital Role in Industry

BY PAT JONES



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foresight to accept it. But the process ultimately relies on the veteran who’s willing to put in the time and effort to shape and mold a future professional. Many of you reading this right now are probably thinking of that special person who decided you were worth it. If so, give them a call to say, “Thanks.”

Golfdom, in partnership with Floratine Products, is also saying thanks to some special individuals who’ve excelled in mentoring young superintendents. Next month, we’ll reveal the names of the four winners of our inaugural “Keepers of the Green Award.” Our first group of honorees is amazingly diverse in terms of age, facility type and geography. But they share one common trait: a deep commitment to passing along a lifetime of knowledge to the generations that have followed them into a profession they love.

For that, we should all say, “Thanks.”

Other 2003 notes

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