

# We've Got Mail

■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

## Up with the "Down and Dirty"

It's nice to see you recognize the dirty work many superintendents do ("Down and Dirty," March). As the wife of an owner/operator/superintendent, I can attest to how necessary it is to get into the trenches, lead by example and come out looking not so pretty.

With two generations of our family running a course in rural Florida, it's necessary for all of the management to get in the middle of projects. My husband has always said that his job is to do the stuff nobody else wants to do — usually that means dirty work. Thanks for recognizing the hard work of superintendents like him.

**Charlene Beebe**  
Indian Springs GC  
Boynton Beach, Fla.

## What Constitutes an Elitist?

I really enjoyed the March article on down-and-dirty superintendents. It was a good article to recognize the contributions that superintendents make to their facilities. Maybe it could be reprinted in a nonsuperintendent magazine since we all know how we contribute. But I digress.

Unfortunately the tone of the article turned a great profile into a acidic diatribe on the haves and have-nots. Every position is different for each facility. Job responsibilities, budgets, and pay scales go hand-in-hand.

A smaller budgeted facility may require the superintendent to be more hands-on. A larger facility, possibly with more than one golf course, may require the superintendent to be more of a manager. But what's important not to forget is that everyone mowed greens, whacked weeds, dug ditches and sprayed chemicals at some point in their careers.

Some still enjoy this aspect of the job while others wanted to move beyond it. It's a personal choice that no one can fault someone from taking. It seems the au-

thor has taken offense to those who have moved beyond to positions that make, according to the article, the so-called "elitists".

The down-and-dirty superintendent needs to be appreciated a lot more in this profession. I've been working at golf courses since 1972, and [down-and-dirty courses] seem to be my specialty. I've worked from the resort in Florida to the flat track in Arizona. The small, low-budget course where I am superintendent now seems to fit me just fine. I have made more money in the past, but I don't ever think I have gotten the reward (personally and from my peers) that I have gotten since I took over a "goat ranch" and turned it into some of the best \$25 golf in town.

There is no better pleasure to me than when one of our golfers comes up to me and says, "I was at the high-end course north of

thor has taken offense to those who have moved beyond to positions that make, according to the article, the so-called "elitists".

The article makes it appear inappropriate to wear Hagar slacks, Nike shirts or Footjoys; grasping shiny ball point pens; shooting for money and glory; cool things to hang on their wall; or sitting in a fancy office.

This is an issue that will be with our national organization for quite a while. It's as if this article tries to widen the divide on an already divided issue. If it's not part of a solution, it becomes part of the problem.

I feel that the author's perceived bias needed a different forum for his expressed views.

Do I become an "elitist" while laying in a hole to help fix irrigation leaks in my free golf shirt, Wal-Mart slacks, FootJoy shoes and holding my nice pen?

**Michael Litton**  
Superintendent  
Princess Anne CC  
Virginia Beach, Va.

*Editor's note: Larry Aylward, the author of the story, did not coin the phrase "elitist superintendent." He only reported what was said by a superintendent in the article.*



Scottsdale, and you have more grass on your driving range tee than they do." Or when someone says, "Your greens are smoother than that

course I paid \$125 at last week." I may not get the glory, but personal satisfaction sure makes you feel a lot better about yourself.

**Donald A. Pleger Sr.**  
Superintendent  
Cypress GC  
Salt River Pima Maricopa  
Indian Community  
Scottsdale, Ariz.

I just wanted to drop you a quick line to tell you how much I enjoyed your article about down-and-dirty superintendents. That is where I came from and, many days, where I long to return.

March's "Down and Dirty" was well-done and gave a good look into an area that is often ignored by other publications. I really enjoyed hearing the different points of view from superintendents that truly have a passion for our profession.

Most superintendents that have been in this business long enough can relate to their passions and challenges. I do have take exception, however, to the comments made by Russel "Rusty" Tisdale.

Tisdale's comment on "elitist superintendents" who do nothing but drive around in utility vehicles and bark orders to workers bothered me. He said, "With their budgets, their people and my attitude, I could do 100 times better." I would suggest to this young man that some things are better unsaid.

I'm sure that some of these so-called elitist superintendents (I believe I would fall into this category) would answer back, "If I had your attitude, I would still be in that irrigation hole with you instead of managing and training personnel on how to get out of that irrigation hole."

**Rick Tatum**  
Director of Golf Operations  
Grey Oaks GC  
Naples, Fla.

I have so much admiration for these superintendents, it's beyond description. I think back over my career and know that my own down-and-dirty experience is one of the reasons I enjoy the success that I have today.

I was one of these guys with no budget who wore Herman Survivors and Levis 365 days out of the year. Now that I wear Dockers instead, I still have the ability to maximize my dollars. I still climb on a backhoe and mower occasionally. It's a great release valve.

**Matt Shaffer**  
Superintendent  
Merion GC  
Ardmore, Pa.

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on down-and-dirty superintendents. It was nice to read about the working superintendent for a change. I consider myself in that category also. My staff consists of two part-time, semi-retired gentlemen and me. I know from what little experience I have in this profession that many courses are in this boat.

Here in northeastern Iowa, there are more golf courses than I can count on my fingers that have this type of superintendent. We have no choice with the budget restrictions we have. My course alone has an annual maintenance budget of around \$45,000, including wages, for the nine-hole layout. Even with this small amount of money I have to work with, my staff and I still take great pride in what we have accomplished and will again in the future.

Your article really hit home. Thanks for thinking of the "little guy."

**Monte Graff**  
Superintendent  
Maple Hills CC  
Tripoli, Iowa

**Got something to say? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Frank Andorka at [fandorka@advanstar.com](mailto:fandorka@advanstar.com), fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.**