

**R**ick Reilly, one of the great sportswriters of our time, should write this column. But the author of the "Life of Reilly" column on the back page of "Sports Illustrated" has left that duty to me.

Thanks, Rick. But I have no problem admitting that you — the man of a million metaphors — could do it better. I quote Wayne and Garth when I say, "I am not worthy."

But here I go. I'll try and write this column to tell what Reilly knows about golf course maintenance and what he thinks about superintendents.

I spoke with Reilly at the Golf Industry Show in Orlando, where he was the guest of honor at a Syngenta Professionals Products get-together. I'm here to tell you that Reilly knows more about the golf course maintenance industry than you might think. While he belongs to a country club, he doesn't fit the mold of the stereotypical clubber — you know, the 25-handicap who has the gump-tion to complain that the greens are too slow.

The 47-year-old Reilly doesn't only hit the ball well — he's a seven handicap — but he can spot a patch of dollar spot on a green and understand where it came from, why it appeared and what it will take to get rid of it.

Reilly understands the superintendent's plight. Even more, he's somewhat fascinated by superintendents' agronomic prowess.

"I love someone who can look at a divot and figure out exactly what the hell a guy's golf swing did to create it," Reilly says. "I think that's cool."

Reilly also likes "watching" a good chess match unfold, specifically between a superintendent and a course's many critters. Reilly belongs to the Country Club of Denver, where he says he has watched the superintendent, Doug Fisher, do battle with a band of pesky foxes. Reilly says Fisher has tried many tricks, including hot sauce, to rid the course of the creatures. Reilly's observations have led him to believe that it's never easy for a superintendent to outsmart a fox — or a gopher, a deer or a bear — to protect the course from the destruction that wildlife can cause.

Reilly is also familiar with the trouble that "one tiny creeping seed of *Poa annua*" can cause superintendents. And then there's the "P" word, as in "politics." Reilly realizes there's more scuttlebutt going on at some country clubs than in an

## Reilly Needs to Write This, Not Me

BY LARRY AYLWARD



**'SI' COLUMNIST IS  
PREACHING TO THE  
CHOIR IN THE PAGES  
OF THIS MAGAZINE.  
HE NEEDS TO SING  
YOUR PRAISES IN  
HIS PUBLICATION**

episode of "Desperate Housewives." "There's always someone who can get you fired because the peonies didn't come up right," he says.

I asked Reilly if he thought superintendents were the unsung heroes at golf courses. He didn't hesitate to answer yes. "Six out of seven charities use a golf tournament to raise money," Reilly says. "Somebody has to keep those courses nice. People won't show up [to play them] if they aren't nice."

While on the topic of nice, Reilly believes that golf courses these days are *too* nice.

"I would say it's getting out of hand," Reilly says of the prettiness that's now attached to maintenance. "St. Andrews is done by the wind, the rain and the sheep. I think we go too far occasionally [in the United States]. I don't particularly need my first divot framed. I don't need a mango-scented towel on every tee box. I mean, come on, it's just golf. It ain't cancer research."

Like you, Reilly knows that people on the outside of the industry — who love golf but don't have an inclination of what you do — are enamored with the profession because you get to spend your days on golf courses.

"Everybody says, 'Oh, that's the job I want,'" Reilly says. "But [superintendents] are getting facial ticks. It's a high-pressure job."

Reilly can't feel your pain, but he can sympathize with it. Problem is, he's preaching to the choir in the pages of this magazine when he calls you the unsung heroes of the golf business. Reilly needs to sing your praises in *his* publication.

What if he wrote a column about the challenges you face? Just think of the impact it would have on the golfers who only have "Caddyshack" to go on when it comes to knowing what you do. My advice to you is to write the writer. Reilly's e-mail is [reilly@siletters.com](mailto:reilly@siletters.com).

Drop him a line and tell him that he needs to write this column, not me.

*Aylward can be reached at [larryward@advanstar.com](mailto:larryward@advanstar.com).*