

**L**udwig Boerne, an 18th-century political philosopher, once said, "Pain is the father, and love the mother of wisdom." Paul Jamrog, a 21st-century golf course superintendent, can relate to Boerne's observation.

The 47-year-old Jamrog, who has been in the golf course maintenance business for 26 years, is the wise ol' superintendent of Metacomet Country Club, a sensational, old design in East Providence, R.I. It has taken Jamrog several years of experiencing the highs and lows brought on by the "love" and "pain" for his vocation to become enlightened to some important aspects of the business. Funny thing, though, Jamrog's enlightenment has little to do with growing healthy turf and everything to do with keeping members happy.

As most any superintendent at any private course will tell you, keeping members happy can be difficult. It can be especially trying when a superintendent thinks he's doing the right things for the golf course but most of the members think otherwise. This brings to mind Jamrog's "love" and "pain."

Jamrog is a student of golf course architecture. He knows enough about Donald Ross, who designed Metacomet in 1921, that he could come back as Ross in his next life.

Unfortunately, most members don't know Ross the way Jamrog knows him. So they don't understand why Jamrog wants to apply certain maintenance philosophies to Metacomet — from topdressing fairways and approaches to maintain their firmness to re-establishing old native grasses to bring back the course's original look — that hark back to the way the course was played in its early days.

"My love of architecture drives me in the way I maintain a golf course," Jamrog says with pride. "I don't think there's enough of that in this business."

But through the years Jamrog has learned that being right doesn't really mean that you're . . . well . . . right. He's learned that he has to think less like a superintendent and more like a service provider. Metacomet's members, after all, are in charge of the course.

## Got to Give Them What They Want

BY LARRY AYLWARD



IT'S HARD TO HAVE  
YOUR HIGH-FLYING  
IDEAS GROUNDED,  
BUT THAT'S LIFE IN  
THE REAL WORLD  
OF GOLF COURSE  
MAINTENANCE. JUST  
ASK PAUL JAMROG

And as Jamrog says, you have to give them what they want, even if it means biting your tongue to the point of pain.

"Let's face it, they're there to play a game — golf — and that's all they're interested in," Jamrog says, the understanding evident in his voice.

While it stings Jamrog to know that most of Metacomet's members don't appreciate the fact that he's a student of Ross' design, he doesn't dwell on their lack of gratitude. In fact, Jamrog realizes he's the one who must adapt to the situation because he could be out of a job if he doesn't.

It's hard to have your high-flying ideas grounded like a misbehaving teenager, especially when you've spent time and effort to form a detailed plan on the way you think the golf course should play. But that's life in the real world of golf course maintenance.

"You go about your business under the radar, do what you can and hope the members appreciate it," Jamrog says. "You have to give them what they want."

Jamrog has worked for 22 years on Ross-designed courses — 12 years at Metacomet and 10 years previously at the Orchards Golf Club in South Hadley, Mass. He wasn't even 30 when he began at the Orchards, and says he brought a "gung-ho" attitude to the club, for better or worse. Some things he wanted to do to the course were well received. Others weren't.

"I used to butt heads with everybody all the time, and it got me into trouble," Jamrog admits.

Jamrog doesn't apologize for his ways. He shouldn't. Hey, he's just been doing what he thought were the best things to do maintenance-wise for two Ross-designed

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## Pin High

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golf courses. He should be commended for that.

But through it all, Jamrog has learned that his job as a superintendent isn't just about him and what he brings to the table. It's about the members and their wants and needs.

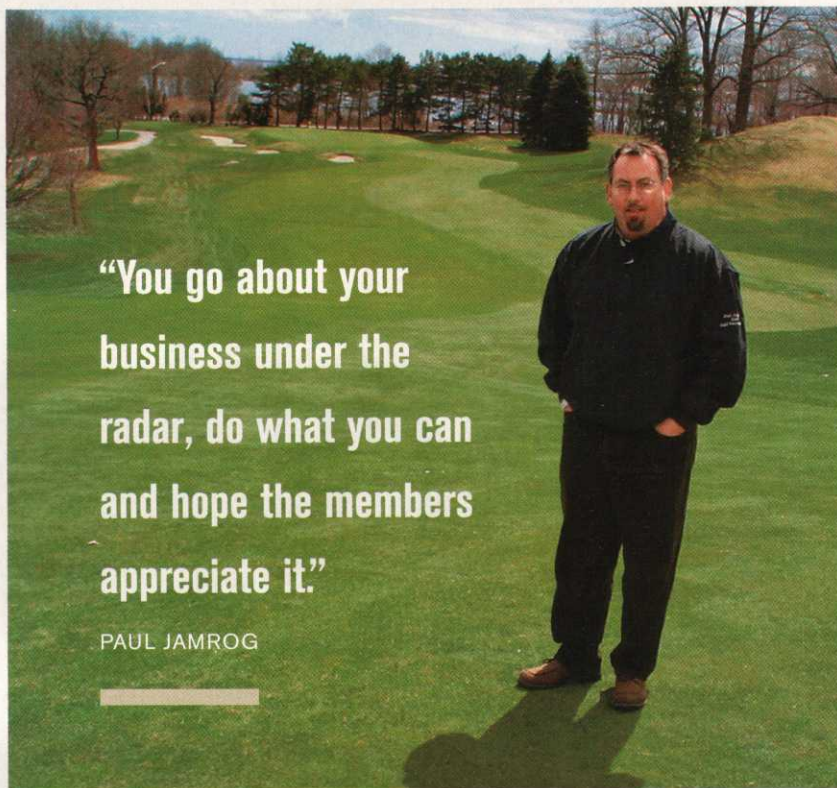
Jamrog also realizes his job as a superintendent is about making a living and providing for his family.

As he looks back on his career and forward to what's left of it, Jamrog realizes the golf course maintenance business, like many professions, is about making concessions.

It's a lot like living everyday life.

Says Jamrog, "You just have to suck it up and take it."

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PAUL JAMROG

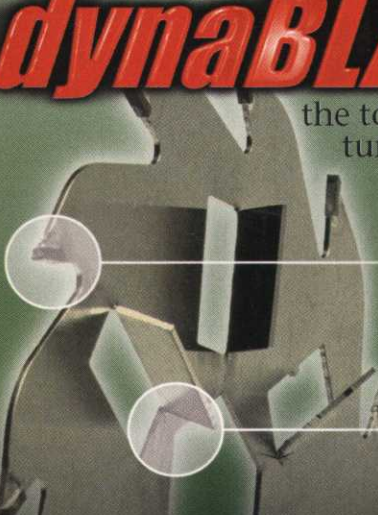
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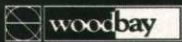
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