



“Like those who work in every other facet of the business, mechanics are being asked to do more with less. In many cases, they are maintaining aging fleets on dwindling budgets.”

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent,*
Wedgewood G&CC, Powell, Ohio

Getting technical

Hell hath no fury like an equipment technician the week after topdressing. Of course, I’m totally joking. Well, maybe not totally. I might be a little bit serious (If emoticons weren’t ridiculous I’d drop the always adorable colon/parenthesis thing here.) But can you really blame them? If there’s one thing mechanics obsess over, it’s quality of cut. And we all know how much running sand through the reels helps with that (semi-colon/parenthesis).

In all seriousness, there are many other things that also demand mechanics’ attention and expertise. Like those who work in every other facet of the business, mechanics are being asked to do more with less. In many cases, due to several years of reduced or non-existent capital expenditures, they are maintaining aging fleets on dwindling budgets with little or no help from an assistant technician. Many are also asked to assist on the course to varying degrees, be it through training equipment operators or actual course maintenance tasks.

Good equipment technicians have at least a fundamental knowledge of the agronomic aspects of golf

course maintenance and understand the need for the more invasive practices that can, at times, wear down equipment. Those who do not yet possess some basic agronomic knowledge should be willing to obtain it, and we should help educate them.

Likewise, it’s important that we have at least a fundamental understanding of a mechanic’s side. Understanding each other’s work will lead to the effective communication essential to running an efficient operation.

I’ve heard mechanics mention challenges such as not being informed of mechanical issues when they arise or being given inadequate descriptions of a problem. Informing the mechanic of

a minor problem in a timely manner can save considerable time and money when it comes to the repair. More importantly, the repair can then be scheduled, instead of becoming a roadblock that ruins everybody’s day.

A proper diagnosis (or at least a competent description) may allow the technician to make a quick repair in the field instead of having to do it in the shop. Using terms like “the plastic thingy,” or “it’s just really jacked-up” aren’t helpful.

Take advantage of opportunities to assist the equipment technician, and ask questions whenever you can. Even if you’re just providing an extra set of hands or grabbing wrenches, you’ll prob-

ably learn something you can use down the road. And he’ll probably appreciate the help.

Assisting him may also enable you to eventually handle some repairs yourself when he is tied up with more serious or difficult issues. Equipment maintenance and repair is a large part of any golf course budget, so the importance of at least being mechanically conversant is pretty obvious.

The International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association (IGCEMA) is another great resource for learning more about the mechanical side of things. Membership is free for all four classifications, and it grants access to webcasts, an online forum, a quarterly newsletter, free job postings and discounts in the IGCEMA Pro Shop. Superintendents and assistant superintendents qualify for the Class D membership.

Maintaining a golf course to current expectations is impossible without reliable and precisely functioning equipment. Making an effort to educate one another and keep each other in the proverbial loop as to what’s going on in our respective areas will go a long way in helping us reach the conditioning standards that we strive for each day. And who knows? Maybe it’ll keep the mechanic’s fury in check the week after topdressing (colon/parenthesis).

Matt Neff (mneff4@yahoo.com) is assistant superintendent at Wedgewood G&CC in Powell, Ohio.