

say and thinks the superintendent is an idiot," Clark insists.

Clark isn't down on all consultants and agrees that many want to help superintendents improve their courses, which would improve their standing with members, green committees and owners. "Some consultants are good at doing that, and kudos to them," he says.

There are other circumstances that can get superintendents in trouble with consultants, Clark says. For instance, some superintendents may be under pressure from their general managers to hire consultants. But the superintendents don't realize the general managers might

Superintendents shouldn't let their egos get in the way of taking advice.

be using the consultants to get the superintendents fired. A good consultant would figure out such a scenario and walk away from it, Clark says.

There are things superintendents can do to make working with consultants more constructive. First, superintendents shouldn't let their egos get in the way of taking advice.

"You have to be willing to admit that you don't have a patent on all of the brains in the world," Pulaski says. "You're insecure if you're not willing to ask for help and find a better way to do something."

Superintendents can benefit more from consultants by letting them figure out a course's imperfections on their own, Ferrin says. That way, superintendents will discover if consultants have anything worthwhile to say.

"One thing I've learned is that you need to let consultants do the work," says Ferrin, acknowledging that he once did the consultant's work for him. "Let them make the proper determinations."

The bottom line: Hiring a consultant is like buying a car. You had better do your homework and know how it works.

"Consultants have a place in our business, Clark says, "but you have to know who you're dealing with."

"You have to be careful," Pulaski adds. "I'm sure there are some consultants who can be influenced by green committee

chairmen a lot quicker than they can be influenced by superintendents."

Consultants and other advisers should take a cue from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a 19th century English poet and theologian, who said of offering advice: "Like snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind." ■

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At some point in your career, someone is going to decide that he or she doesn't like your style. When you are lined up in the cross hairs of club politics, you'll find that some shooters are deadly accurate and others couldn't hit the broadside of a pump house. But they all have trigger fingers and the shots *are* going to come.

Know thine enemy

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was to seek out possible assassins and share a meal with them. Maybe you don't have to do a formal lunch at your facility, but the reality is that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. What gets said behind your back is hard to take, but giving your enemy an opportunity to tell you what he really thinks of you and answering his remarks while looking him in the eye will probably reduce the blind shots aimed at your head.

It's not easy to choke down your Chinese chicken salad while some codger reflects on how fast the greens were in 1930. It's harder yet to tell Dr. Super Surgeon that you still haven't figured out the latest disease outbreak, when he's saying, "It's only grass. What's the problem?" I'll bet you don't want to attend the ladies lunch and partake of tuna salad in a hollowed-out tomato while a golfer, who just carded 54 putts, claims her round was ruined when one of your crew members started a mower 500 yards away from her when she was putting on the No. 11 green. You don't want to eat the snack bar's half-cooked Hole-in-One Pancake with an egg in the middle on Sunday morning and listen to Mr. Well-Traveled tell you that every course he played on his last trip was better than yours.

It's not easy dealing with the hard cases. But if you do, you may find people's perceptions can be altered. You must face your enemies. You may even win them over.

Learn to write and speak effectively

I never knew that I could write well until one summer we had our turn in the barrel and "the greens weren't as good as they should have been." The rumors were flying around our club, and I had had enough. So I wrote a nice letter to

In the Cross Hairs of Club Politics

BY DAVE WILBER



OLD ISSUES AND
OLD STORIES MIX
WITH A LITTLE
SCOTCH AND TAKE
ON LIVES OF
THEIR OWN

the members that was handed out in the golf shop and posted above the urinals and on bulletin boards. I explained what I knew and what I didn't know, and asserted that I'd like them to get behind me because it was the right thing to do. It worked. I keep a copy of that letter to remind me that communication is vital, and that doing it well helps you get through tough times.

Some Turfheads need work on their communication skills. Words, both written and spoken, are incredibly powerful tools that the modern superintendent must learn to use well. Plenty of help is available if you need it.

But remember: There's communication and there's blabbering. Superintendents who feel the need to tell everything they know or think they know may as well enclose themselves in a soundproof booth because nobody's listening.

Let them shoot each other

Club politics can get nasty. Old issues and old stories mix with a little Scotch and take on lives of their own. Veterans of politics know the players are easy to spot. They are the same people who disagree with the same people — no matter what the issues.

It's not just a private club thing, either. One of the bloodiest war stories I've ever heard was at a public golf course charity event. The superintendent walked into an argument between the event's organizers, tried to choose sides and managed to get canned for reasons having nothing to do with the golf course's condition.

The bottom line: They didn't teach us in turf school — but they should have — that politics happen no matter where you are. But accepting the fact that you must deal with political affairs is another turf-management strength.

Dave Wilber, a Sacramento, Calif.-based independent agronomist, can be reached at dave@soil.com.

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Ounce of **Prevention**

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Strict maintenance schedules can cure utility vehicle breakdown blues



It would be easy to say that all utility vehicles look alike, but looks can be deceiving. Each brand mandates its own maintenance schedule.

Their name begs you to use them. Their versatility tempts you to push them harder than you do other equipment. They can haul sand to that hard-to-reach hazard on No. 16, and then turn around to drag a pesticide sprayer around a fairway. It's a no-brainer to use them at every opportunity, right?

But the versatility of utility vehicles is also their curse. Your maintenance operation can slow to a crawl when they break down. That's why, despite their ruggedness, experts say utility vehicles need rigorous maintenance schedules to keep them running smoothly.

It would be easy to say all utility vehicles look alike, but looks can be deceiving. Each brand mandates its own maintenance schedule, and warranties may be voided if those are not followed. You can find the schedule your utility vehicles should follow in your owner's manual — a book too often found, still in its shrink-wrap, on the shelf above a superintendent's desk, says Rick Farris, manager of technical reliability for Club Car. The Augusta, Ga.-based company attaches an owner's manual to every piece of equipment it sells, and Farris advises his customers to use them.

"So many times, you walk into a facility to service a utility vehicle, and you find a stack of owner's manuals unopened," Farris says. "Some superintendents believe that they've been in the industry so long, they know all they need to about maintenance. That's a dangerous assumption to make, and it can cause headaches down the road."

Once you've cracked a manual and discovered the recommended maintenance schedule, post it prominently in your facility. It's not just the mechanic's responsibility to know it — every employee should understand his or her role in practicing preventative maintenance, says Eric Kulaas, shop foreman at the Renaissance Vinoy Resort & GC in St. Petersburg, Fla., and founder of the online mechanics' community *turftech.com*. Automate the maintenance schedule whenever possible, says Kulaas, who suggests entering the information into a computer program such as Qquest to remind you what maintenance needs to be done each day.

"The more automated the system is, the better off everyone is," Kulaas says. "You want to take the guesswork out of the situation. If you're not equipped to keep a record on a com-

puter, make a checklist that your employees have to initial before they take a machine out on the course."

Graham Foot, manager of product support, field service and training for Raleigh, N.C.-based John Deere Turf Care, says utility vehicles often break down because they're carrying unreasonable loads. Superintendents should understand what the carrying capacities are for their vehicles and not exceed them.

Once, Foot traveled to a course in Malaysia to troubleshoot a fleet of vehicles. The general manager asked him to wait outside the maintenance facility while he brought a vehicle around for inspection. Foot was floored when he saw the vehicle carrying *four times* the recommended load — nearly 2,000 pounds of fertilizer and workers. That was all Foot needed to see to diagnose *that* fleet's problem.

"It's not just a matter of straining the axles or hurting the physical part of the machine," Foot says. "Overloading your machine causes uneven tire wear and extra strain on the engine. You're just asking for trouble unless you know what [a vehicle's] carrying capacity is."

Continued on page 47

Will Preventative Maintenance Become No Maintenance?

Cars can now go 100,000 miles with little more than a tune-up. Will utility vehicles eventually go 1,000 hours with the same maintenance-free style? Here are some advances in utility-vehicle construction that will move them in that direction:

■ Lower number of grease points.

Graham Foot, manager of product support, field service and training for John Deere Turf Care, says utility vehicle manufacturers are starting to produce vehicles with fewer joints that need lubrication. That means less time greasing them and fewer parts to break.

■ Automatic transmissions.

Automatic transmissions will replace five-speeds and save maintenance budgets money in burned-out clutches, says Larry Jones, product manager at Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products.

■ Electric-powered vehicles.

Ron Mullen, supervisor of golf and turf product support for John Deere, says electric motors will require less maintenance than traditional combustion engines. Just remember to keep the batteries charged.

■ Steering column simplification.

Drive shafts currently have so many joints that it is easy for something to break down, Foot says. There is a movement toward less complex construction, which would reduce maintenance needs.

■ Plastic body construction.

Rust always threatens metal-framed machinery, but Jones says not to worry. As more durable plastics come to the market, utility vehicles will use more of them on the internal parts, protecting the inside of the machine as well as the outside.

—Frank H. Andorka Jr.



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Circle No 120

Ounce of Prevention

Continued from page 45

Create a checklist

Items that should be checked on a daily basis include oil levels, tire pressures and coolant levels, says Ron Mullen, supervisor of golf and turf product support for John Deere. Mullen, who was a superintendent for 20 years before joining John Deere, recommends superintendents buy a tire pressure gauge that measures in single pounds per square inch. Normal car air pressure gauges don't allow superintendents the precision necessary for tires as small as those on utility vehicles, he says. Over-inflation will cause an uneven distribution of loads and excess tire wear, Mullen says.

Larry Jones, product manager at Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products, says keeping utility vehicles clean will also prolong their life. If grass clippings accumulate around fittings and sand gets inside hoses, they can clog fuel lines and eat away at bolts. "You have to wash your machines daily — that's critical," Jones says.

But the cleanest machine on the outside still can be sidelined by dirty fuel. Foot says moisture and mildew invade storage tanks and foul the fuel. In turn, the contaminants can clog a utility vehicle's fuel injectors, which prevents the engine from running properly. Eventually, a poorly running engine will conk out. "It's a lot cheaper to pay a little money for a proper storage container than it is to replace a whole engine," Foot says.

Mullen recommends against using a fuel additive because there's no standard method of judging what affect it will have on the machine.

Log the hours

Make sure you keep track of the hours your utility vehicles have logged since most maintenance schedules are based on those calculations. To keep an accurate track, superintendents should install hour counters on utility vehicles, Farris says.

"If you're serious about a preventative maintenance program, an hour meter is a must buy," Farris says. "If it doesn't come standard on the equipment you buy, it's important to install one yourself."

Kulaas says the key to proper preventative maintenance is establishing a routine. If you do, the rest of the process is a breeze.

"If you set up a rigorous maintenance schedule and stick to it religiously, you're going to get a lot more life out of your vehicles," Kulaas says. "Most of this equipment is well-made, and it will last you a long time if you just take care of it."

Whatever you do, make sure your employees understand the importance of not abusing your utility vehicles, Foot says.

"While utility vehicles are some of the most useful pieces of equipment your club can own, they're not indestructible," Foot says. "You have to take care of these machines the way you would take care of your own cars. A few easy preventative steps will extend the lives of these machines and increase your club's return on investment." ■



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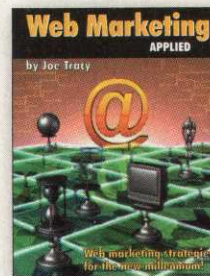
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Circle No 177

Like clockwork, you can get on and off Hunter's Ridge GC in Howell, Mich., in a timely 4.5 hours. At Hunter's Ridge, there are few delays, even when the 18-hole course is crowded with hackers. Players can count on moving along smoothly, like new cars on an efficient auto assembly line.

"If someone wants to blow off work at noon on Friday to play 18 but has a dinner date at 6 p.m., that person knows to come here to play," says Mike Miesle, co-owner and superintendent of the 6,532-yard, links-style course.

There's order on the course at Hunter's Ridge because every third hole has a clock posted near the tee. The clocks don't tell the correct time; they inform golfers of their tee times. How does this ensure steady play?

Say your threesome tees off at 8:50 a.m. Miesle, who consulted USGA's formula for pacing, has it figured it will take the group a certain amount of minutes to complete each hole. For instance, the golfers who tee off at 8:50 should arrive at the third hole in 30 minutes. On that hole, the golfers will see a clock with the sign, "This is your tee time." If the clock says 8:50, it's telling the golfers they're on time. If the clock is later than the group's tee time, say 8:55, then the golfers are five minutes behind the course's pace and need to pick it up. If the clock says 8:45, the golfers are five minutes ahead of the pace.

When the threesome arrives at the 6th, 9th, 12th, 15th and 17th holes, the clocks will also say 8:50 if they're on time. If all goes well, the threesome should complete their round in 4.5 hours.

"There are courses in the area where six-hour rounds are common," Miesle says. "So our clients appreciate what we're doing. A golfer knows he can check in, hit a bucket of balls on the range and be back in his car and on the way home in five hours."

It's elementary why Miesle's clock plan is good for business — despite having to extend tee-time intervals from eight minutes to 10 minutes to make the plan work.

"We lost a few tee times, but we're not hearing any complaints," Miesle says. "Our players are happier."

Time Is Money at Michigan Links

BY LARRY AYLWARD



THERE'S ORDER
ON THE COURSE
AT HUNTER'S RIDGE
BECAUSE EVERY
THIRD HOLE HAS
A CLOCK POSTED
NEAR THE TEE

As a golf course owner, you can't put a price on pleased customers. "It just leads to more business," Miesle says.

There are a few vital elements for success, however, to keep the plan on track. For starters, Miesle must deal with slow *and* fast players.

Slow players who are behind their tee times will be told politely by rangers to get moving. If they have to be told twice, they must pick up their balls and move to the next hole to catch up.

Fast golfers, on the other hand, are encouraged to stay on time, even if they're ahead of the clock. They're also not allowed to play through at Hunter's Ridge because they'll screw up the system.

Miesle has found that fast players cause more delay problems than slow players. "People that have complained about slow play were actually playing too fast," he notes.

This is the second year for the clocks at Hunter's Ridge, and Miesle says the system works splendidly.

"It's easy for the golfers," he says. "All they have to do is remember their tee times. We never had a severe pace of play problem, but there were a couple of holes that slowed golfers down."

The system was simple for Miesle to implement — and cheap. He purchased the clocks at Wal-Mart for a mere \$3.50 each. The idea earned him first place at the National Golf Course Owners Association's Idea Fair earlier this year.

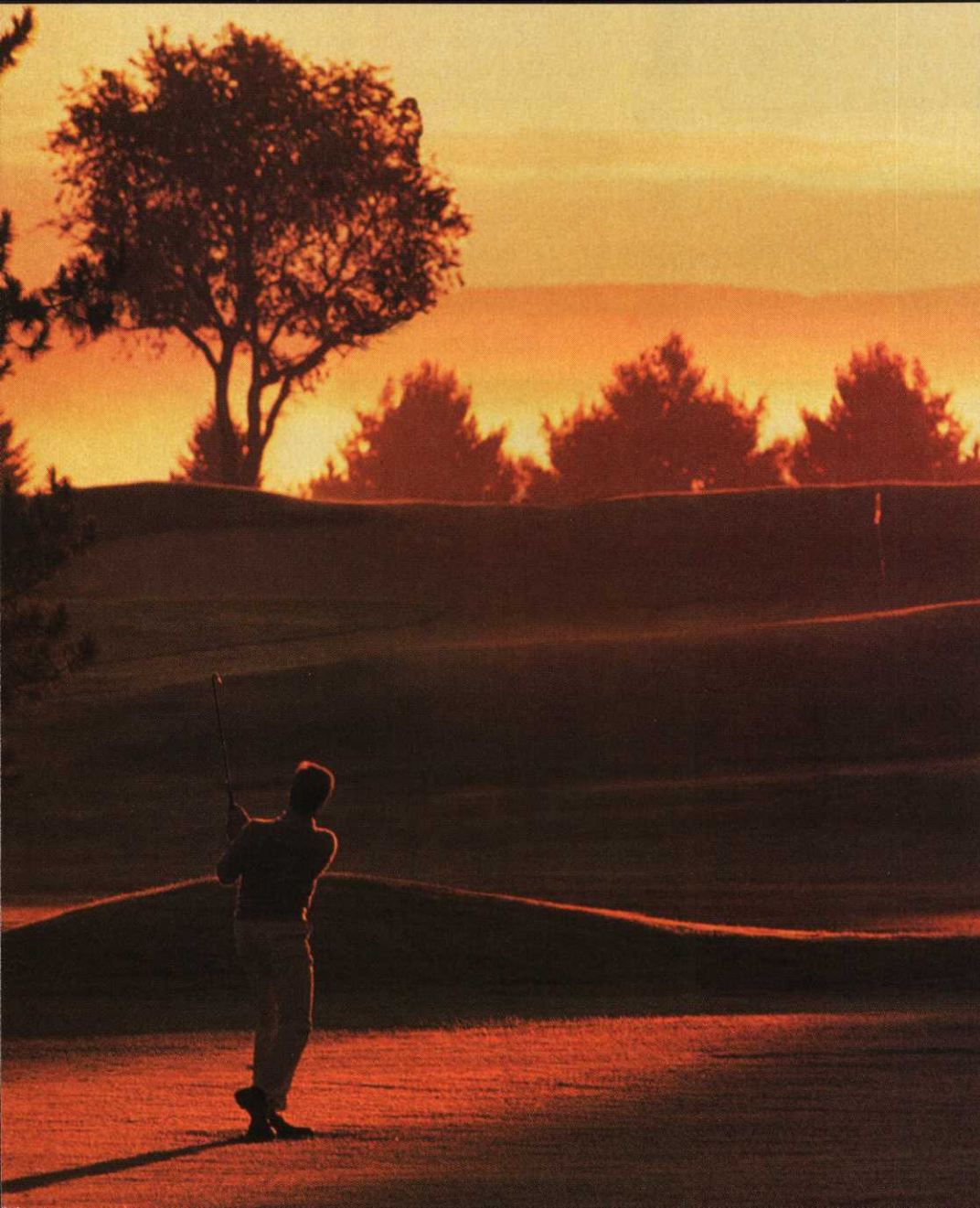
Now busy golfers know where to go to play 18 and get off the course at a reasonable hour. Maybe Hunter's Ridge should adopt a motto. How about: "A good time is had by all."

Larry Aylward, editor of *Golfdom*, can be reached at 440-891-2770 or larylward@advanstar.com.

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