



MUST A GREEN SUPERINTENDENT PLAY GOLF?

By Dr. David Cookson

The question posed above obviously has only one answer — no, the green superintendent need not play golf; but at the same time I submit that his job is made much easier and is more effectively performed if he does play the game on a regular basis.

I would suggest that being responsible for the maintenance of a golf course and not playing the game is akin to setting oneself up as a marriage counselor without ever having been married; or doing sports commentary without having personally ever having been engaged in the activities being analyzed. No doubt one can do a competent job without being actually involved in all these endeavors; but unless the green superintendent experiences exactly what the member golfer is encountering in day to day play he will find it difficult to completely understand what is needed for his course to achieve the highest standard of playing condition.

I think it is imperative that the green superintendent **walk** his golf course. Too often the membership sees him only when whizzing hither and yon in his golf cart, probably en route to some necessary task, but one never sees the little things, that can make such a difference, as well from a cart perspective as one can on foot. The true condition of one's golf course can only be ascertained by stepping on it, and of course, ideally the superintendent would walk the course by playing it; but if he is not a golfer, and finds it impossible to learn to play with enough skill to make it enjoyable and worthwhile, there are alternatives. The best one is to follow along a couple of times a week with players who are experienced and knowledgeable about course conditioning and thus vicariously absorb the benefit of their findings. The membership will be pleased that the superintendent who does not play cares enough to solicit this kind of experience. Another possibility is to have a weekly meeting with one or two such interested members, who would make notes during their play on the course ahead of the meeting, then at the meeting all would go out on the course together to review the various situations. Preferably this knowledgeable member would be the green chairman, but if he is not interested, or unavailable, some other individual could be tactfully selected.

Any green superintendent can make a golf course look good from afar, but it takes special knowledge of day to day conditions and needs to make a course remain in top shape for the golfer who is out there playing. The best golf courses both look good and play well; and to answer the original query that prompted this essay, these courses are usually either supervised by a golfing green superintendent, or one who has solicited the aid of experienced golfing members to help him in acquiring the data needed to ensure the best playing condition possible.

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