



A Player's Perspective

MAINTAINING COMPETENCE

By Dr. David Cookson

I know this column is entitled the "player's perspective," but this time I am going to be writing from the point of view of the green chairman and responsible club official as well as the player. My concern is the continuing education of the green superintendent.

Now I know all of you have had excellent preparation in fine academic institutions for your current position, if you are relatively young; and if you are older you have undoubtedly been fortunate enough to have learned the ins and outs of your profession under the tutelage of one or more wonderfully experienced and erudite teachers of the art and science of green keeping, but in either case, I hope you are regularly taking advantage of the myriad of opportunities to remain abreast of current thinking and innovation pertaining to your job. One can get by with the knowledge one brings to his job for a certain period of time, but to continue to work to one's best ability, one must be continually learning, questioning, and seeking better ways to achieve top performance. This demands continuing education, both informally by reading trade journals, but

also formally by attending regional and national meetings. One must retain an open mind to new ideas and concepts, and this cannot occur unless one presents oneself to a situation where these concepts are being discussed and evaluated, not only by those lecturing or advising but by the equally important experience of discussing common problems and solutions with fellow green superintendents that one meets at such gatherings.

In this sense, your profession and mine are similar. A physician may go a long way relying only on his past experience and training, but eventually he becomes but a mediocre practitioner at best if he ignores the opportunity to renew his fund of knowledge and expose himself to fresh insights. I know personally the feeling as one gets older, that perhaps time spent traveling to a meeting is really wasted, that "I won't learn that much anyway," and "I already know most of what will be discussed," but these thoughts must be resisted and overcome. Nearly always one feels after going to a meeting or seminar that it was worthwhile, and indeed something of value did

occur. A good physician seeks consultation readily when confronted with a difficult problem; similarly the green superintendent; and educational seminars, or utilizing the USGA green section consulting staff, can provide this much needed assistance toward top grade turf maintenance.

Lastly, the green chairman and club officers appreciate the effort of the green superintendent to remain current in his field. We like to know that our superintendent is actively exposing himself to different thoughts and new ideas, and can present us with the best of current concepts to aid solution of difficult problems. Most importantly of all, the green superintendent who is well versed and up to date in all phases of his work creates genuine self respect and a feeling of confidence and competence in doing his job, which by itself enhances his performance. This is, of course, too the most important result from the player's perspective.

David Cookson