



By Bill Roberts

Wisconsin Golfers and Wisconsin Superintendents: Mutual Responsibilities

A "relationship" is defined by Mr. Webster as an "aspect or quality that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working together or as being of the same kind," and further as "the state of being mutually or reciprocally interested." With a bit of effort, a central thought begins to emerge as one reflects upon those explanations. Words such as "two", "together", "same", "mutually" and "reciprocally" are all examples that either imply or explicate a real sense of shared or joint responsibility.

And...all relationships must be viewed as a responsibility by both parties if the arrangement is to be successful. Each party must bring something "to the table" and be willing to give that "something" up. Each party must be "mutually or reciprocally interested" in the end result.

In my opinion, members of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association have done an admirable job of contributing to turfgrass research funding. Through the dedicated efforts of those involved with the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, great strides have been made in both the quality of the work being done by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and in the dissemination of the resulting information. This whole process is a direct, tangible applicable benefit for those who participate in the "relationship."

In my own case, I've used the services of the pathology diagnostic lab, and I'm not bashful about using the telephone when needed. Educational programs and field days are available. Proceedings are published. Field visits are made. Data is collected, interpolated and interpreted. We've seen and used the end results. We have brought our support "to the table", and

we have benefitted. We contribute around \$10,000 a year to specific Wisconsin research, to the O.J. Noer Foundation and to GCSAA and I, for one, am proud of that effort and you are to be congratulated.

But it is, quite simply, not enough. A certain segment of the golf turf industry is not meeting its responsibility in this relationship. They must be "interested" in the end result but, in my experience, they are not, for the most part, "bringing something to the table." They are enjoying a direct, tangible, applicable benefit with, at best, a minimal effort. And what's even more disturbing is that I'm not sure they are to blame. I'm not sure they are even aware of the degree of shortsightedness involved. I am referring, of course, to those who derive the most appreciable advantage from our support of the researcher's work; that is, the golfing public.

Today's player has become accustomed to conditions that were unheard of 30 years ago or 20 years ago or even 10 years ago. We've all seen and are involved with those conditions because we are, rightfully, charged with providing them. Uniform, smooth and true putting surfaces. Closely clipped, dense, disease-free fairway turf. Clean, firm teeing ground. Appropriate irrigation management. Judicious application of plant nutrients and the safe, effective use of plant protectants. All of these separate parts combined with some superior management skills and the aforementioned credible sources that resolve golf turf dilemmas have produced these outstanding playing conditions that today's player has come to expect.

But in Wisconsin, at least, that same player is not carrying his fair share of

the load. We have no mechanism or process for allowing players the opportunity to contribute. We have not done a very effective job of explaining our needs nor the reasons we should be able to expect support. We intend, with your continued help, to do something about that in the future in the form of a subtle, yet determined, drive to raise funds for the O.J. Noer Research Center in Madison.

We need this "Research Center" as the focal point for valid investigation of the problems which have and will continue to challenge our industry. We need this facility to supplement and enhance the excellent educational opportunities now available to future Golf Course Superintendents, future industry people, future researchers and future teachers. We need this project completed in order that we may have a place to gather to identify those challenges and see what can be done to meet them. But most of all, we need to realize this particular dream in order that we, including Golf Course Superintendents, officials, professionals and players may insure the continuation of "assumed" excellent playing conditions and the enhancement of Wisconsin's growing reputation for such conditions. We're proud of what we've built, but we all need to "go a bit farther."

The bottom line is that when you are asked to contribute, and you will be, at some point, in some form, do not hesitate. But don't wait either. If you haven't been asked yet, take the initiative and offer to contribute. Go to your Board of Directors or your Green Committee or your owner or whoever you need to go to and explain the need and the end result and the fact that it is their responsibility to. It is, in the final analysis, a mutual need and we can get the "ball rolling." But we have to talk to all of those who benefit, not just ourselves.

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