



# Playing Privileges

By Rod Johnson



Not every golf course is the same, nor are the golf course superintendents that they employ. Our job descriptions are often as varied as the terrain we manage. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, our salary and benefit packages differ greatly. In our profession, a lengthy job description does not necessarily insure wealth.

Recently, an employment opportunity flyer crossed my desk that listed "Playing Privileges" as an employment benefit. At the risk of offending someone, my reaction is, "Why, thank you! How very generous of you! Will the local Piggly Wiggly accept these privileges as barter? Does the IRS need to know about these Playing Privileges or can it be our little secret?"

Seriously, most of us view playing privileges as a given with the position. However, how many of us take full advantage of them and realize their full value?

I personally enjoy the game tremendously. I credit much of the success that I have had as a golf course superintendent to a playing knowledge of the game. The opportunity to view a golf course from a player's perspective has proven invaluable to me.

I am as addicted to golf as the next nut. If I was employed in a different field, totally unrelated to golf, I am sure that I would still play frequently. Through the years, I have been fortunate enough to take my game on the road, so to speak. From WGCSA meetings to GCSAA tournaments, I have had the privilege of playing numerous golf courses. At one time or another, I have attended the three "majors" that are held in the United States. In each and every instance, I have gained something. From a small maintenance idea to a major breakthrough, a game of golf nets something tangible.

I have nothing but respect for those members of our profession who provide excellent playing conditions on

their golf courses, yet do not play the game. A quick mental list of Wisconsin's best maintained golf courses reveals many superintendents who would prefer to use golf clubs as boat anchors. Nevertheless, the fact is that for every well-conditioned golf course where the superintendent does not play golf, I can name five courses that benefit greatly because their superintendents play golf regularly.

In the last issue of our newsletter, 44 superintendents were polled regarding who sets green speeds at their clubs. A surprising 73 percent claimed that they set green speeds themselves. I hope that 100 percent of the "speed setters" play golf. Playing golf is the only way to understand the anguish of a four-foot downhill putt with a left to right break that lips the cup and rolls twenty feet away.

The point of this all is to challenge every WGCSA member to know the game and the people who play it. Perhaps you could pool your playing privileges with the club professional and get a game with the green chairman and club president.



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