



# HARDHATS

By Monroe S. Miller

For 17 years I've avoided pressure to have my crew wear hardhats on the golf course. I used a lot of different arguments to escape: "no one's been hit"; "no one's ever been injured"; they (hardhats) are extremely uncomfortable"; "hardhats offer little real protection".

When my arguments weakened, I dodged the issue. Whenever I was cornered I somehow slipped away and another hardhatless season slipped away too. Call me the Teflon superintendent.

Things have changed. No more slipping away. Late last summer, at the annual meeting of our past presidents, the suggestion of hardhats was brought into discussion. The times had changed. Liability is a key word. I sensed I was going to have to set aside my own intense dislike (from one season of being forced to wear one of the miserable things) and see to it that my crew wears them. It's difficult disputing the judgment of a former Dean of the UW Medical School (a neurologist, no less). It's impossible not to be concerned about the welfare of others.

"It's for their own good," I was told time and time again. Easy to say when

you don't have to wear one.

I'm not convinced. Hardhats were intended for construction sites and other places where risks of things falling from above and causing injury are real. They are meant as protection from head injuries from falling beams and concrete blocks. I cannot believe they will be of much value in protecting a fairway mower operator from a two iron shot a hundred yards away. Those shots, as with most dangerous golf shots, aren't on target for the top of a person's head. The hardhat will protect a small portion — from the hatline and up — but a vast majority remains exposed. A hardhat will not protect your temple or the forehead area between your eyes.

Obviously, my situation led to this issue's questions for Wisconsin golf course superintendents:

- 1.) Do you **require** your employees to wear hardhats?
- 2.) Do you **provide** your employees with hardhats but offer little or no enforcement of wearing them?
- 3.) Do you have, essentially, no policy or provisions for hardhats?

The questions were posed to 29 Wis-

consin golf course superintendents, mainly those who were in attendance at the GCSAA Conference in Orlando during the week of February 20. I had no idea what to expect in terms of results and therefore I wasn't surprised one way or the other.

Here are the results:

- 1.) Require — 12
- 2.) Provide — 7
- 3.) No policy — 10

In my own case, for those who might be interested, I'm in the second category. I'll provide hardhats and guidelines for wearing them. There is, for example, no reason to wear a hardhat while moving cups at 6:00 a.m. (the lousy things won't stay on when you bend over anyway). Similarly, there seems to be no reason to wear a hardhat while mowing tees. Fairway work is a different situation and one could logically see requiring them on that job.

The medical and insurance community in some clubs prevail on this issue and that's what happened to me.

I feel sorry for my employees this season. But not so sorry that I'll wear a hardhat in token support.

I loathe the damn things.

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