



It's Time To Communicate

By Rob Schultz

Dear Hack:

I read the May/June GRASS ROOTS with interest, especially your stupid little insinuation that golf courses would be better off without golf pros.

Who babysat you from age 12 to 18 every summer day when you rode your bike out to the golf course to learn the game? Who got you your first real job? Who taught you how to putt, which is the only thing you can do right on a golf course?

Do the names Jock McClaren and Lou Warobick ring a bell? They were wonderful golf pros. I should ring your neck. If you're going to insinuate anything, how about if you say the world would be better off without hack writers like yourself.

Love, Mother

Dear Mom:

Lighten up. IT WAS A JOKE.

Love, Hack

God forbid if I upset any golf professionals because what I admire most about them is their levity. Part of it is salesmanship, of course, but most pull it off so well that you can never tell if it's not sincere. So a frowning golf pro is like Princess Diana with a mustache.

Unfortunately, some golf professionals have a blind spot when it comes to golf course superintendents. Some talk about how they want to work together. That's fine. But in the conversations I've had with some superintendents they get a feeling that the pros at their clubs want to improve relations with them, as long as they benefit.

You've got to hand it to the pros. They have perfected their profession to the point where jealous clubs have begun making life difficult for them by cutting into their bottom lines. You can't blame them for getting a little testy when someone even jokingly implies that they aren't as valuable as somebody else.

Nevertheless, as a group, the pros are much better off and better organized than the superintendents. In fact, the superintendents could learn a thing

or two from them about how they are perceived by the general public.

To John Q. Golfer, the golf pro stands up in the pro shop and looks like a white knight. He's the guy who can cure that slice. So he's indispensable to John Q. Golfer.

The golf course superintendent stands up in his shed and still looks like Ralph Kramden. Or, worse yet, John Q. Golfer doesn't even know the course has a superintendent. I'll be willing to bet any money that a well-manicured club's pro gets 50 times more compliments about course conditions than its superintendent. That's a travesty and it breeds bad feelings.

If the pros and superintendents really want to work together, they need to communicate, not just among themselves, but with the members and the public golfers about their roles.

The superintendent has to get the word out concerning who is responsible for how the course appears—good or bad. (Note: It works both ways. I know at least one course in this state where the pro takes all the guff for bad conditions while the superintendent hides in the shadows.) The superintendent has to prove that he's just as indispensable, or even more indispensable, than the pro.

At too many clubs, I see signs at entrances with the names of the club manager, the pro and even the assistant pros. But there's no mention of the superintendent. That must change.

At most clubs, I see signs listing do's and don'ts for golfers such as replacing divots and fixing ball marks in greens. But that's it. Each superintendent should put together a pamphlet—a rule book for course conditions—that members must buy IN THE PRO SHOP. And the money should go to the superintendent or bolster the maintenance budget.

Pros give lessons how to improve the swing. How about superintendents giving lessons on how to improve course conditions? Throw in a bonus lesson on how golfers can improve their yards and you're sure to have a large group show up.

Finally, the pro, superintendent and club officials must work together to end the white collar-blue collar, I'm better-than-you-are-because-I-wear-polyester-and-you-wear-those-dirty-overalls conflict. In other words, everybody should feel like they belong.

How many PGA executive meetings have included input by superintendents? Most meetings should include them. They should have equal status.

How many GCSAA executive meetings have included talks by golf pros? Most meetings should include them. They should have equal status.

Every business has some sort of conflict similar to what pros and superintendents face. The good businesses figure out compromises.

It's time for the golf business to become a good business and for everyone to work together to prove they all are indispensable.

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