



THE SUPERINTENDENT FIT

By Pat Norton

So just what is the superintendent fit? How does the superintendent fit? How do you as a superintendent fit into the management team at your golf club? Do you and your staff get the respect of everybody at your golf course? Or, are you taken for granted by your golfers and not accorded the treatment that a professional deserves? Indeed, do your superiors view your work as that of a professional? Do you, as a golf course manager, view yourself as a true professional?

These may be some pretty heavy questions, but, in my opinion, are questions that we should all ask ourselves from time to time.

How should the golf course superintendent be viewed by the golfers, fellow staff, BOD, owners, municipal officials, or whomever? If you, as a superintendent, have any smarts whatsoever you will insure, through your job performance, that everybody views you and your staff with a sense of respect, even awe, in light of what they experience every day out on your magnificent golf course.

Remember, golfers generally have a very poor idea of how it is that the golf course looks and plays so great on a daily basis. There is a bit of mystery involved in the looks of a well maintained golf course, at least in their minds. It serves notice that course managers are highly trained and experienced professionals.

Each and every superintendent must carve out a niche and enhance it whenever possible. Mainly, it's carved out through the performance of your responsibilities, which should result in a finely conditioned golf course complex. This results in a strong superintendent fit.

Recognition can also come from professional involvement in turfgrass associations, involvement in church or civic groups, other business involvement, or simply by playing the game of golf. Like it or not, non-golfers, a golfing superintendent, for some reason, is perceived to understand the game just a little bit better.

Golf course conditioning has changed

dramatically even since the 70's when I was in high school. Heck, we didn't even realize that there was a difference between our golf course and any other, except for those mythically perfect private clubs up in Madison. I still clearly remember hearing about those courses and their plushness. I also remember that nobody seemed to know why they were so perfect. It was assumed that they'd always been that nice without any special care.

Today, we are seeing the ultra high quality golf course becoming commonplace. As the demand for good course conditioning has risen, so too has the stature of the golf course superintendent. This makes for a great superintendent fit. I can't imagine being in a position of the greenkeeper of yesteryear.

As the quest for ultra high quality continues there will also be those instances when excess abuse tends to creep into the picture. Usually, the powers-that-be provide funding, ideas, and recommendations in the proper manner. At too many golf courses, though, these same people seem to control everything.

The superintendent must stand up for himself, his ideas, his recommendations, and his programs. This leadership trait is a common characteristic found in every successful superintendent.

Do not be led around by your green committee, BOD, or owners. Have the

courage to stand up for what's right and proper. Doing that daily will make you a better superintendent, and will enhance your superintendent fit.

The superintendent must be given the autonomy to operate the golf course in the correct manner. The key, however, is that each superintendent must earn this autonomy through solid course management, leadership, ability, diligence/work ethic, and a good knowledge of golf.

In addition, the superintendent must have the intestinal fortitude to stand up for certain beliefs. By employing this fortitude, you will begin to create a better superintendent fit.

Your superintendent fit will be much smoother and your stature will rise if you stand up for yourself. This is, of course, assuming that you are right in your recommended course of action. Secondly, you need a track record of good management to rely on before being so bold as to stand up to your Board of Directors on a particular issue.

There seems to be too many instances of others making decisions and then expecting the superintendent to blindly carry out their orders.

Enhance your superintendent fit by standing up for yourself. It's what any good manager is supposed to do.

In other words, don't let anyone else run your show.



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