



Real Green Committee Chairmen Can Read Blueprints!

By Monroe S. Miller

When asked about including green committee chairmen among those featured in REAL columns, one colleague observed "you're dumber than I thought."

Another said "pretty risky," and a third noted "you like living dangerously." And then there was Rod Johnson egging me on, suspecting the chances I'd put my foot in my mouth were pretty high. "Go for it," he giggled.

The years I have been around private golf courses—nearly thirty now—have exposed me to green committee chairmen of all stripes, both at my own course and from others I worked on as a student as well. I know of what I write.

My own career has been blessed by this group and our course is far better because of them. Not everybody has been as lucky as I have been, and I know that is fact. The chairman's influence, in the extreme, can be a negative.

I offer these real observations with the confidence the real green committee chairmen will be able to tell when I'm teasing and when I'm serious.

Admittedly the title should be real chairpersons or real chairmen/chairwomen since up to five green committee chairs of WSGA clubs have a woman's name; two are for sure and three (Lynn, Jo, Pat) could be.

Let's see; we have dealt with real superintendents three times, real salesmen and now real green committee chairmen. That only leaves real golf pros and real clubhouse managers. Are we saving the easiest until last? We'll see; stay tuned!

- Real green committee chairmen can read blueprints!
- The real green committee chairman knows when the real golf course superintendent talks about "Millie", he isn't talking about the Club Women's champion. He knows he is talking about Milorganite.
- The real green committee chairman knows what Milorganite is.
- The real green committee chairman has thick skin and does not believe in appeasement. He is a person of sound philosophy and firm convictions. He knows solid golf course management will sometimes irritate and aggravate players. They are interested only in the immediate; the chairman takes the longer view.
- Deep down, real down deep, the real chairman would really like to climb aboard a Toro 5100 or a LF 100 and mow fairways. Just once.
- Real green committee chairmen know there is nothing more obvious or out of place on a golf course than a feature designed by a green committee, its chairman or the superintendent. He leaves golf course design to golf course architects; that's why we have them.
- The real green committee chairman insists on dealing with the golf course superintendent on a first name basis. "Ceremony isn't a part of this job," he says. "We are in this together," he remarks to the real golf course superintendent. "There is no reason we cannot be friends."

- The real chairman knows the best way to kill a good committee is to meet too often. He convenes the group when there are decisions to make, planning to do and progress to report. The real chair is a leader, for sure, but he is also democratic. Oftentimes he is a facilitator, drawing the best thinking from each committee person.
- The real Wisconsin green committee chairman knows that when the real golf course superintendent talks about Dr. Kussow, he isn't talking about his GP.
- The real chairman wonders, as he watches a golf course staff person loading topdressing with a powerful Ford loader tractor, if that is as much fun as hitting a good nine-iron shot.
- Real green committee chairmen from Wisconsin know who O.J. Noer was and his significance in the history of golf turf, not only in Wisconsin but in the U.S. as well.
- The real green committee chairman subscribes to the Zontek principle: golf isn't played on a Polo sweater or a hamburger. He works to keep the club priorities in order, which isn't always easy.
- Real chairmen insist on a USGA Green Section visit each year. Although they respect the golf course superintendent, they realize he doesn't get around like the Green Section agronomist does.
- The real green committee chairman knows that John Deere isn't one of the real golf course superintendent's buddies.
- Real green committee chairmen know there is more to a good golf course than ultra fast greens, super short fairways and skinny sand. They know if they insist on these conditions day in and day out, they won't be popular in the clubhouse for long. And the golf course is at risk as much as they are.
- The real green committee chairman knows that a Lawnboy isn't a kid who works on the clubhouse grounds.
- The real green committee chairman, like the real golf course superintendent, prefers not to have to deal with the endless and somewhat dainty amenities that pollute tees and tee stations on too many golf courses these days, making them somewhat resemble a strip mall. You know, ball-washer, two trash containers, a fancy bench, exotic signage, divot mix containers, broken tee canisters, etc., etc. (All that's missing is a McDonalds). The real chairman likes a flag, a stick and a set of tee blocks only. "Have at it," he tells others in his foursome as they gather on the first tee.
- The real green committee chairman cringes whenever he takes a divot. When he does, he looks around sheepishly to see if the real superintendent is watching.
- When the real chairman sees Professor Rossi on the golf course, he recognizes him and doesn't mistake him for a member of the summer staff of college students or the lead guitarist of Led Zeppelin (the summer staff isn't allowed long hair, shorts or earrings).

- Real green committee chairmen walk when they play golf and they believe "golf cars don't cause the damage — golfers do!"
- The real green committee chairman knows who Old Tom Morris was.
- The real chairman knows that when he hears the real superintendent talking about Jacobsen, he isn't talking about a Madison meat market or a Danish kid on the golf course crew.
- The real green committee chairman never suggests that the real golf course superintendent should "nuke" anything with any pesticide. Like the real golf course superintendent, the real chairman hopes to see the day when pesticide use is unnecessary.
- Real green committee chairmen know the difference between "Audubon" and "Otterbine".
- The real green committee chairmen recognize their task is made most critical and special by this simple truism: golf is the only game in the world in which the field of play is as important as the game itself.
- When the real green committee chairman hears the real superintendent talking about a Ransome, he knows he is talking about machinery, not a bank robbery.
- The real green committee chairman can name the predominant golf turfgrass specie in Wisconsin. It's *Poa annua*.
- The real green committee chairman doesn't, either secretly or overtly, plan to rebuild the golf course the way he wants it. He knows his service is to the players, not himself.
- The real chairman knows it isn't the greens committee. He also knows the origin of the use of the word *green* for his committee.
- Occasionally, the real chairman's wife complains this job takes too much of his time. He takes his chairmanship seriously and is dedicated to it.
- The real chairman likes green committee meetings in the shop, not in the clubhouse. He enjoys kicking tires and seeing what is going on in this interesting building. He prefers the smell of gasoline and Milorganite in the shop to that of table flowers and air freshener in the clubhouse.
- The real chairman knows when the real superintendent is talking about Toro, he isn't talking about a course in California.
- The real green committee chairman has a sense of humor.
- The real green committee chairman knows it irritates the real golf course superintendent when he is called the greenskeeper or the greens superintendent.
- The real chairman doesn't bug the real golf course superintendent to get him freebie green fees on a couple of other golf courses each week of the season. Once in a while is okay, though.
- Real green committee chairmen know the importance of proper budgeting for a golf course. They know the relationship between funding and quality is direct, if not perfectly parallel (that is what separates the good superintendent from the best). They believe there is truth in the old saw "you cannot make a silk purse from a sow's ear."
- When the real green committee chairman hears the real golf course superintendent talk about moving more and more toward IPM, he knows this isn't a stock tip about some global growth fund.
- The ultimate paycheck for the real green committee chair is for a member of the club to pat him on the back, comment on the fine course conditions and offer "thanks". 🌱

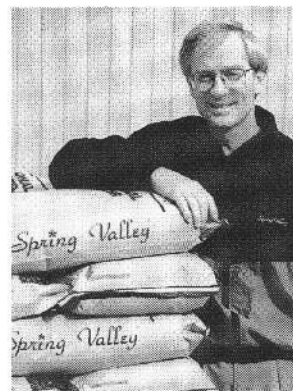
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