

Golf Course Superintendents Address Golf Course Owners Convention

By David Brandenburg

On Wednesday, November 15, a panel of five superintendents addressed the Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin (GCOW) at their annual convention in Stevens Point. The main purpose of the panel was to discuss the superintendent's role and responsibilities at a daily fee or for profit golf club (for profit is criteria for a club joining the owners association). Speaking as superintendents were Al Brohman with Pinewood Country Club, near Minoquoia; David Brandenburg with Camelot Country Club, Lomira; Jake Renner with Trappers Turn Golf Club, Wisconsin Dells; Tom Johnson with New Richmond Golf Club, New Richmond; and Rod Johnson with Pine Hills Country Club, Sheboygan.

Each superintendent had twelve minutes to present his information, with a question and answer period after all five had spoken. Al Brohman went first and spoke about his operation at Pinewood Country Club where he is the owner/manager/superintendent.

Pinewood is a 18-hole course on a large piece of property with a super club. Al prefers to be his own superintendent because he feels he has a unique operation with a short season, and enjoys doing it himself. He also has had less than ideal results with superintendents when he managed a new construction in Illinois. Al's father built the course himself and opened for business in 1962 with a 3-gang mower being the main piece of equipment.

As time progressed Al became more involved in the operation and took over from his father while adding nine holes. Although the course has a automatic irrigation system, it has a very unique pump system, with 6 water sources and pumpstations. (four gas and two electric) For the most part Pinewood is a family run operation with Al's son and daughter-in-law becoming involved. He feels being his own superintendent is best for their operation.

David Brandenburg spoke on his responsibilities as a superintendent at a

daily fee operation where conditioning and profitability take a equal role. He covered a variety of responsibilities from fertilizing to purchasing and cart paths to hiring. Some of his main points were; it is a superintendents responsibility to not just use fertilizer, chemicals and water on a calender basis but to do so with proper timing and rates, along with having proper knowledge and understanding of plant and pest life cycles. This is not only better for the turf but avoids unnecessary applications that waste money or missed applications that result in turf damage.

He spoke about the administrative responsibilities he has that are becoming more important and time consuming, such as management of staff to get the work done efficiently; proper

budgeting to let the owner/ board know what to expect; and recordkeeping like chemical applications sheets, employee job sheets to track what's working and what isn't.

One of the superintendent's responsibilities that may be overlooked at some clubs is staying informed with current ideas or methods. This is done through the use of literature, association meetings and communication with other superintendents. In closing Dave said that communication between the superintendent and owner/board is the key to having the golf course maintained at the desired level. This communication is a two-way street with the superintendent giving the best possible advise for the operation and the owners expressing what end product they desire.



Jake Renner spoke on the Audobon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and what they have done at Trappers Turn Golf Club. After a brief history of the program he explained how to register and the work and benefits involved in doing so. Currently Jake has submitted his resource inventory sheets and is waiting to get his report back from New York so he can work toward certification. Jake also covered the sometimes not so pleasant topic of underground storage tanks or UST's. At Trappers Turn they had a leaking tank from the previous owners of the property, so he told about the excavation of the contaminated area and the continual testing that has gone on since then. Fortunately the tank remained the responsibility of the seller, so Trappers Turn did not have the expense of the cleanup to deal with.

Tom Johnson discussed the use of pesticides on golf courses and how,

with their proper use, they are not damaging the environment. He stressed all superintendents should be stewards of the environment and take responsibility for keeping it safe from missapplications or other damage. For most superintendents it was their love for the environment that got them involved in the golf business in the first place. He also went on to say it is our responsibility as individuals (superintendents or owners) to be proactive when it comes to getting the message out about pesticides, and part of that is being educated about the different products available and the research showing they are not ruining the environment.

Rod Johnson talked about WGCSA and the other associations superintendents belong to and why owners should support their staffs' involvement in them. One good point Rod brought up was that by attending the owners conference themselves, they

showed that they believed continuing education and association involvement was important. He covered our meetings and the educational benefits they offer along with the professional networking opportunities they produce. For those who do not have superintendents at their courses, he asked would the better conditions a professional superintendent could provide justify a higher green fee to pay his salary? Also he brought up that the superintendent is not just a money spender, but the profit center for the golf course.

After the speakers were finished they answered a hearty round of questions from the floor until time ran out. The panel was very well received by those in attendance and their participation in this conference should benefit both the GCOW and WGCSA along with improving the relationship between the two organizations. ♣

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