



Valuable Lessons

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As the snow melts and spring approaches turf students have lined-up their summer internships and are certainly looking forward to getting out of the classroom and onto a golf maintenance crew. I will be working for the second year as an intern with Aron Hogden at University Ridge Golf Course. In preparation for this coming summer, I have been reflecting on a few valuable lessons that I learned last summer.

The Importance of Course Setup

I had the chance to do just about every job on the golf course over the summer. I learned a valuable lesson in the ways of one particular job: course setup.

Course setup, at first glance, seems like a mindless and simple job. However, the duties that are encompassed by this job are vital to the aesthetics and playability of the golf course. The course setup job includes emptying the garbage cans on each hole, cleaning and then refilling the water jugs on the course, moving tee block markers, cleaning cart paths with a turbine blower, and a handful of other detailed tasks such as trimming the turf around yardage markers. None of these tasks are especially difficult, but each one is quite important. If the water jugs are improperly sterilized, customers could be exposed to harmful germs and bacteria. If the tee block markers are not moved daily, the underlying turf will die due to lack of sunlight. These details are what make the difference between a good golf course and an excellent one.

Throughout most of the summer, we had the same person work on course setup. The man who was given this responsibility was given full control and ownership over the task, which inspired him to be proud of his work and really manage himself. The best thing about this situation was that nobody ever had to worry about the course setup duties throughout the summer. Being able to forget about this simple but crucial handful of tasks was very helpful to the superintendent, and it allowed him to focus on more pressing agronomic and managerial issues.

Leadership

In my opinion, the most valuable aspect of my summer learning experience was developing leadership skills. Interestingly, I learned how to lead myself first. I began to be conscious of the decisions I was making and how they impacted the way others think about me as a worker. When other people see that you are a hard worker, they will be more apt to follow your



Sod work can challenge a supervisor to keep his team motivated.

lead and take your advice. When people have positive interactions with you, they walk away feeling good about themselves. Learning to manage myself was the first step to developing leadership skills this summer.

After I had established myself as a hard worker, I was given the opportunity to lead others. I ran a four-man crew and was given eight hours to aerify, fertilize, and topdress six greens in our practice facility. I learned, first of all, that it is more challenging than it looks to lead others through a long, hard project. More importantly, I learned that I can do it.

Midway through the summer, I started making "practice schedules." I would write up daily schedules including all 25 crewmembers and their morning task, and then compare it with the assistant's schedule. He would give me advice and explanations for our different ideas, and I would get to ask questions about his choices. Towards the end of the summer, I was given the opportunity to write real morning schedules on the board. It was very rewarding, watching my plan go into action successfully on those mornings that I scheduled. Writing these schedules is challenging for two reasons; you need to have a strong grasp on all of the daily maintenance needs of the golf course, but you also have to know the skill set and abilities of each and every crewmember in order to effectively assign tasks.



The entrance to
University Ridge

The most valuable leadership concept that I took away from the summer comes from a book titled, "The One Minute Manager." In the book, a simple but powerful quote reads, "Happy people produce good results."

Final Perspectives

Despite this being my fourth season in golf course maintenance, I feel like I learned more than I have in any past summer. I feel much more confident about my skills and decision-making abilities, and I feel much more pre-

pared to apply for a leadership position at a golf facility.

I also learned a really valuable lesson last summer, and that is that it does not matter what specific job you are doing at any given moment. As Robert Duvall says in the movie *Lonesome Dove*, "If you want only one thing too much, it's likely to turn out a disappointment. The only healthy way to live, as I see it, is to learn to like all the little everyday things." 🌿

Welcome New Members

John Anderson, D, Arthur Clesen

Ian Baier, Student, Bluemound Golf and Country Club

Jim Dawson, E, Lannon Stone Products

Johnathan Dippel, C, New Berlin Hills Golf Course

Timothy Dyczko, D

Andrew Gruse, E, Spring Valley

Craig Haltam, SM, Nakoma Golf Club

Chip Houmes, E, Precisiion Labratories

Bill MacDonald, E, Yamaha Golf and Utility, Inc

Adam Neate, E, DuPont Professional Products

Robert Rafferty, A, Bruce Company

Gary Rhea, SM, Riverdale Country Club

Danny Sander, D Floratine Central Turf Products

Marc Schwarting, D, The Bridges Golf Club

Brent Smith, E, Floratine Central Turf Products

Stacy Solberg, C, Oshkosh Country Club

John Turner, E, Bayer Environmental Science

Scott Verdum, SM, Kenosha County Club

Kevin West, E Rain Bird

Matt Zehms, SM, Whistling Straights - Irish Course

Paul Zuehl, E, Yamaha Golf & Baroness Turf