

If It Isn't Green!

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A good many years ago we would hear the old lament from the turf side of the landscape contracting business that the golf course people were a very 'nomadic' group.

The old saying was, "Don't unpack for you may not be there very long!" After 25 years that situation hasn't changed very much.

Insecure About Keeping It Green

The other day we were visiting with a local superintendent about some renovation taking place at his course, and a comment he made then brought back to mind this whole situation about the insecurity felt and experienced by just about every superintendent in this business of "keeping it green!"

This very affable superintendent made the following comment, which really brought home this precarious plight of almost every superintendent in this business. He said, "This is the first time in my 10-year career that I have ever felt I might buy a home where I've been!"

What a sad commentary on this business!

Don't Unpack

Another note in a recent issue of the Green Sheet Bulletin from the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association announcing the names of a couple of 'supers' and congratulating them on their just receiving their 'certified' status struck me because it was in this van of 'don't unpack!'

One of the recently certified superintendents was congratulated on how long he had held his present job. He had been there 10 whole years. The comment sounded, "How many other Florida superintendents can say that?"

Enough examples of this problem.

What's The Answer

Well, there probably isn't any one answer to this situation. Too often it's because the "grass isn't green." That in itself is such a big subject that there is no answer.

Somehow the superintendent is expected to perform miracles in spite of weather conditions and all the related problems turf can be subjected to. Unfortunately, he is dealing with and reporting to green committee chairmen and club managers who know practically nothing at all about

turf and landscaping. We will not be able to change much in that respect. One either lives with it, puts up with it or moves on!

'Supers' Defend & Educate

Oh, there are defenses and maneuvers which might help. One of the biggest openings is to educate and convince the 'management' group that greens were never intended to be cut down to the so-called tournament 1/8" and a stimp-meter rating of 10 to 12. Ask any 'super' who has had a USGA event and suffered these requirements and how long it took to get his course back in decent shape for regular day-to-day play.

Greens are where it's at. Sure fairways and roughs are important, but it's the greens they complain about. Perhaps that's as it should be since *aficionados*, such as Dave Peltz, have pointed out that 80% of the game is played around the green.

Take your committee or manager around to talk with some other same-region course superintendents and let them experience a broader viewpoint.

In Florida this year, you can inspect most any layout and find lots of general problems. After 10 to 15 years of the wonder turfs, Tifway and Tifdwarf, segregation and winter damage are on a rampage. Moving superintendent and playing 'musical chairs' isn't going to answer the problem!

Camouflage!

There are some ways to "keep the members happy." Do a great job on the rest of the layout. Beautify the course with stunning floral displays. Police the grounds with diligence. Keep the crews well-groomed and busy. Sloppy, inactive maintenance people can cause a lot of bad relations. Explain in memos posted to the membership what the problems may be.

Get to know members and management on a business-like basis. At 'daily fees' treat the players as if they were regular members. Above all, keep the equipment and the operational center in top, spic-and-span shape. Friendliness and reasonable contact in the proper way can help keep you content with your position and your players pleased.

Yes, you may even be able to unpack and perhaps buy a home!