

The Greens Committee Meeting That Wasn't

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As I was preparing my column for this issue, I received a phone call from a very good friend who just needed to talk. He was quite upset, almost choked up at times as he related his experience at a recent Greens Committee meeting at his course. The first words out of his mouth were "I just experienced the most unbelievable display of disrespect, personal attacks and cynical attitude I have ever seen in my 10 years at this club." He told me that he was "bushwhacked" by a member of his committee with no warning. I asked him what the beef was all about. When he told me, all was made clear. GREEN SPEED!!! The more I listened, the more frustrated I became and asked him if I could share the conversation in *Hole Notes* if I maintained strict confidentiality. To my surprise he agreed and actually encouraged me to write it because he thought it might help other superintendents in the same situation.

He said green speed is something he has always struggled with at his course. Who hasn't??? He said that for the last few weeks of cooler weather (late June, early July) the members were very satisfied with the "speed" of the greens. This was why he was so taken by the attack at the meeting in mid July. He knew that the warm weather was going to cause more rapid growth, hence making them "slower" in the afternoon but felt that the overall health of his turf was great going into a peak stress period. He told me that the initial attack came when this member said "These greens are slower than *every* course around here, *you* have to cut them shorter!!" I wish I had a dollar every time I heard that!!

He said this issue has come up before and he explains the negative side effects of mowing shorter and tried to explain what he does to keep the speed up by topdressing, grooming, verticutting, double mowing, rolling and a lean nitrogen fertility program. Without his even being able to finish the explanation the second attack was made: "That isn't working, *you* better just cut them shorter!!!!" He told me that the entire meeting went downhill from there with more cynical remarks and zero respect for any explanations.

My response to this is: "Man, what makes these committee members think they can treat people this way?" He told me that his mistake was not standing up for himself when the member made the issue personal. "I should have said that it was obvious that this issue cannot be discussed in a professional manner at this time. I should have closed my notebook and left the meeting." Easy to say, very, very difficult for anybody to do. However, I feel my friend was right. We are professional turf managers, hired to manage the grounds on a golf course and he should have

left the meeting in a professional manner!!! I asked him what the other members of the committee were doing. He told me that a couple tried to bring the meeting "back to earth" but the majority were all totally intimidated by this member and just sat there not knowing how to respond.

He said that he called the chair of the committee, who by the way was not the one having the fit, and explained that he would never tolerate that kind of treatment from anyone again. His greens chairman agreed 100% and praised him for his professionalism and maintaining his composure during that meeting.

Every superintendent that I know, male and female, experienced or new to this profession gives 150% of themselves to their course, often at the expense of their own family life. Not one person knows their course better than the superintendent. Every course is different and needs to be managed in a unique manner. To base the management of a golf course or any part of it solely on comparisons to other courses is foolish at best! If you are serving on a greens committee and happen to read this, please, don't you be the member described above. Better yet, don't just sit there intimidated as others did at my friend's meeting, stand up for your superintendent, show him or her the professional respect they earn and deserve every day!!! ENOUGH SAID!!!

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