



INSIGHT:

One Assistant Superintendent's Perspective

*By Chris Tritabaugh
Town & Country Club, St. Paul*

Background

I am the Assistant Superintendent at Town & Country Club. It is a 6,300-yard course located on approximately 100 acres near the Mississippi River in St. Paul. T&CC was the first golf course built in Minnesota.

This will be my 12th year in the business. I started on the grounds crew at Albany Golf Club when I was 16 years old. At that time it was a promotion from my current job as clubhouse gopher. Little did I know it was to become a passion and a career. I spent five seasons working at Albany Golf Club during high school and college. While enrolled in the turfgrass program at the University of Minnesota, I decided I needed to find a job at a higher profile course. I got an opportunity at Town & Country and spent two years there as an intern. After graduation, I moved on to St. Cloud Country Club where I spent one season as Assistant Superintendent. After that I came back to Town & Country, where I am beginning my fourth season as Assistant Superintendent.

Why and/or how did you enter the turf management industry?

While I was working at Albany I always found myself wanting to know more about the industry. I read magazines, asked questions and did whatever I could to learn more about turfgrass. I loved my job and figured if I could work on golf courses for the rest of my life I would be very happy.

Who was your professional mentor and why?

I have had the chance to work at some great courses with some great guys. Tom Kasner and Mickey Saatzer at Albany, Dan Hanson and equipment technician Greg Glader at St. Cloud Country Club, Bill Larson and equipment technician Mike Romundstad at Town & Country. Each of these gentlemen has taught me things I use every day. I consider all of them to be mentors and friends.

What has been the highest point in your career?

Having the chance to interview for and then get my first assistant job at St. Cloud Country Club before I had finished my last semester of school was the highest point of my career. There have been many other moments but to this point that has been my highest point.

What has been your lowest point?

It is difficult to pick a low point. There have been some very difficult days but the next day always comes with a fresh start and a chance to reach a higher point.

Are your greatest challenges political, agronomic or managerial?

My greatest challenge is feeling I am prepared to be a superintendent but not being able to completely control how or when that is going to happen. There are many people in the same situation as me who will be looking to move on to super-

intendent positions and finding out how you can set yourself apart from those people is very challenging.

What is the most difficult disease to manage on your course and how do you?

Like most people in this part of the state, our biggest problem right now isn't disease but how to keep our greens alive over the winter. If I come up with a way to do it I will let you know.

Is it hard to find good help in your area of the state?

We have never had trouble finding help at T&C. We always have a good mix of college and high school students, retired guys and Hispanics. This year we will have three U of M turf students on the crew.

Where will our industry be in 10 years?

My guess is there will continue to be innovations in fertilizers, chemicals and equipment but on a whole the industry will probably not be much different then it is now.

Where would you like to be in 10 years?

In ten years I hope to have a family and be a successful superintendent at a course that makes my family and myself happy.

What is your perspective of our state association and what would you change?

When I was at the U, the support for our turf program was starting to improve but since I've been out of school that support has skyrocketed. It has been great to see such support and the benefits that support brings to the turfgrass industry in our state are outstanding. As an Assistant Superintendent I have been pleased to see more space in *Hole Notes* devoted to this position. If I had to change something, I would continue trying to make assistants a more integral part of our association.

Name your foursome, who would you play with and why.

My foursome would include my dad, my brother and Tiger Woods. My dad and my brother are two of my best friends and who would not want to play a round of golf with the best player in the world?

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