



Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak, CGCS

Well, that was quick.

Is it just me, or did it seem

like we just got the golf course open this year, only to have the season fly by and come to a rapid, abrupt end the first full weekend in November? Each year I marvel at all the things area Superintendents and their crews accomplish in such a small window of time. Hopefully all of you were able to get the course put to bed before the first snow, or certainly after the melt-down two weeks later.

So now it is the long off season. This year it looks like about five full month's worth of "down time." We are not alone, you know. There are others- roughly half the country- that have a similar dilemma of what to do during the winter.

It is pretty easy to become provincial as a golf course superintendent. Our job consists of taking care of X number of acres and that we pretty much have to be there every day to do

so. We aren't traveling very much to say the least. The fortunate ones get to escape in the winter on a vacation or two, with work likely being the last thing on their minds. A few more are allowed to go to the GCSAA show and experience all it has to offer but even then, I am willing to bet most guys tend to hang out with the same fellows they know from the area mostly. It's what you do. You hang out with the guys you know and are familiar with.

Technology has been able to break down some of that provincialism. Whether it's through TurfNet, Twitter, Facebook, etc. more conversation is taking place between superintendents all over the country and the world than ever before. But why is this conversation happening? What does a guy in Florida have to do with a guy in International Falls, or a guy in the Arizona desert, or New Jersey?

I recently was lucky enough to be involved in a congregation of ten superintendents from a variety of regions nationwide for a couple days of discussion about the industry. It was an amazing

experience. What made it amazing was not that we were all successful superintendents, or we all did unique things to manage our courses or provided revelations to the people that brought us together that will change the industry. What was amazing is that ten total strangers from all across the country got together and exchanged thoughts and ideas feely and honestly like they were lifelong friends. I came away from the experience realizing one thing for sure: that there is a bond that every superintendent has, for the most part, with each other. We are almost all cut from the same cloth. No matter where or what type of club we work at, we all have similar issues we have to deal with. We can all relate to each other. I would call that a brotherhood- the brotherhood of golf course superintendents.

There are other professions that can be called brotherhoods I suppose. Any profession in which a person's life is on the line like police and firemen come to mind as a brotherhood. Certainly there is a brotherhood to our fighting forces. But for what is kind of a solitary existence growing grass and managing a crew, there sure is a lot of camaraderie when we

all get together. That's what I experienced with this group, and I made what will be lifelong friends in a few short days.

I bring this experience up to implore you to branch out if you are able. It is such a valuable thing to get together with other superintendents and exchange thoughts and ideas, or even just complain if that's what you need. They get it, they understand believe me. I also implore you to do it on a face to face basis. The brotherhood is exponentially stronger over a meal or a beer than over an electronic device. There is no substitute. Chat rooms can only take it so far. Twitter is a one and a half way street. There are plenty of opportunities locally to bond with other guys just trying to do the same job you are. Take advantage of them. With that, I hope 2014 was a solid season for you all, and we will see you in 2015 at the Northern Green Expo.

By the way- doesn't Brotherhood of Golf Course Superintendents ring truer than Golf Course Superintendents Association of America? Maybe I should contact Lawrence.....