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What's A Superintendent To Do? *When Rising Expectations...Confront Declining Resources*

Fore Front

You can almost always have a sure bet if you say that whenever two or more golf course superintendents get together they will eventually discuss the requests of their course's golfers and how this conflicts with the budget they have to do the job.

A similar wager about those inside the clubhouse would probably be just as safe, with the twist being that the clubhouse dwellers would be concerned with how the superintendent fritters away their funds while the man down the road is doing such a superior job.

This is the confrontation of rising expectations and declining resources. The golfers desire more and more, or at least make unrealistic comparisons to other courses, while the superintendent is granted lower budgets and faced by higher costs for all goods and services.

"What's a superintendent to do?" asks the headline. Certainly a question easier to pose than answer, but nevertheless, a question that deserves exploration and attempted answers.

This problem of rising expectations and declining resources is not new, nor is it isolated strictly upon golf course superintendents. Each and everyone of us face it daily, just as almost everyone else is bound to do sooner or later. Obviously, the solution is not an easy one or the problem would not persist for so long a time, nor with so broad of scope. A complicating factor added to the problem is what works one place has no guarantee of working anywhere else.

In the most basic of terms, a golf course superintendent faced by this problem has few possible alternatives. He can rely upon the reputation he has developed and trust that his recommendations will be accepted. He can arrange "test plots," and "demonstrations." He can do whatever he believes is proper, given a certain budget, even though the golfers may complain. Or, he can follow the dictates of the golfers for as long as the budget holds out and then tell them that that will be all of the maintenance and management they can have until more money is forthcoming.

Certainly, there are other possible solutions, but these

basic points probably get the idea across. The solution is not going to be an easy one, and patience and understanding on everyone's part will be required.

Of the above suggestions, probably only the first two have any chance of working for the superintendent and the course. Basically, both of the above suggestions rely upon "education" of the member, by the superintendent.

Reliance upon a reputation is undoubtedly the best possible position for anyone. If the superintendent's suggestions have proven acceptable in the past, they will certainly have a better chance in the future. However, superintendents cannot wait until the last minute to try and build a basis for acceptance, it is a continuously on-going proposition of informing the golfers what you are doing, why you are doing it and letting them brag about the splendid results.

"Demonstration plotting," is another usually acceptable approach, providing there is sufficient time and even small amounts of money for the project. More and more superintendents are setting aside relatively small areas of the actual playing surface from time to time and demonstrating the differences a particular operation can make to the course. Following the application, operation, or whatever, the golfers are asked to decide which of the two areas they want, providing they are willing to pay for it. Most often, if the superintendent has done his homework and knows the total cost figures, the golfers will opt for the improved conditions because they can actually see the differences.

The only other serious problem a superintendent will have is to educate his golfers on the effect just a few miles distance can make in the maintenance budget of two courses. Natural terrain, soil conditions, the course's maintenance history and even rainfall can vary tremendously in short distances, and have significant effects upon what a superintendent can or cannot do given any amount of money. In fact, the whole idea of comparative golfing should be overcome, but because grass has always been greener elsewhere, it is unlikely that such thinking can be easily reversed today.

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May Mid-Atlantic Meeting

The May meeting of the Mid Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents will be held at Bonnie View Country Club on **Monday, May 17, 1976**. Note the change in date. This will be our annual pro superintendent tournament. Invite your pro or assistant pro to play with you or your assistant at our tournament. Package plan — \$60.00 pays for pro and superintendent — covers tournament entry fee, cart, open bar, and dinner. Additional guest fees are \$30.00. Lunch is available from 11:00 am on a cash basis only. Package plan is to be paid in the pro shop.

Our host, Ken Braun, has been at Bonnie View for three years and was formerly assistant to George Thompson at Columbia. Kenny tells us we have the golf course to ourselves on Monday. Last year we had 125 participate in this event, so get your reservation cards in early.

Golf — 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Social Hour — 6:30-7:30 pm

Dinner — 8:00 pm

Speaker — William Buchanan,

USGA Representative

Directions — From Baltimore Beltway 695 take exit #22, Green Spring Avenue south (inside beltway) two miles to Smith Avenue (2nd light). Turn left on Smith — club is one mile on the right.

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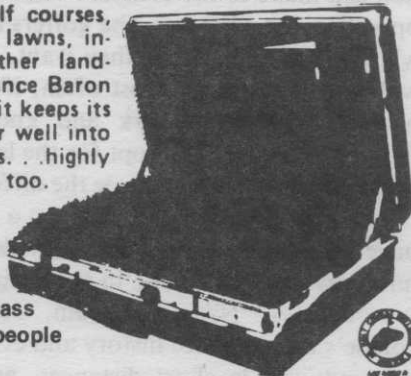
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President's Message

"Nature manufactures perfume and floats it in the air. The temperature rests at a comfortable setting. Crickets obligingly, unceasingly, provide background music. The stars twinkle in the heavens — or rain drums cozily on the roof. The stage is set; the script is written and we all fall in love."

The Liquorian

When the temperature first hit 90° last Thursday, I came home from the club and picked up a magazine to take my mind off the impossible occurrences that had happened during the day. Being superintendents in the Mid-Atlantic area, we can expect the temperatures to take crazy flips now and then. The magazine I picked up Thursday was a religious one. I find my Maker is comforting when temperatures reach the upper limits of my temperature graph, and the above verse struck me as

quite ironical at the time. To dissect this little verse and have some fun will only take a minute of your time. How many of you have walked out on your course or yards the past couple weeks and breathed in that wonderful perfume that nature has manufactured? "Ah-choo", God Bless You! You've noticed all that pollen too? Isn't it funny how many superintendents are allergic to pollens, we with our hands in it all the time. "The temperature rests at a comfortable setting" indeed, this is the sixth day of 90° plus weather and I'm praying for some relief. As dry as my dormant poa is, I'd enjoy seeing water leak through into my shop, drumming cozily on the metal roof. Talk about music to my ears! The stage is set, the script is written, I'm afraid summer is trying to tear the door off its hinges. God bless us all.

David Fairbank



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Golf Course Superintendents Merit Respect As Turfgrass Doctors

From G.C.S.A.A. FORE FRONT

Golf Course Superintendents are professionals, not magicians. An analogy between superintendents and medical doctors can be drawn to illustrate the point.

After years of training and experience, both superintendents and doctors are prepared to examine ailments and prescribe treatment. Both are dealing with living objects. Both are concerned that the life continue. A great deal of mystery and misconception surrounds both occupations and their practices. Often the cost of their services is considered too high, in some instances exorbitant. Appreciation is expressed only when the "patient" approaches some near tragedy and is "saved," to be useful and complete again.

One major difference between superintendents and doctors (other than income) is that superintendents must work to keep their "patients" at the verge of death, through extremely close cutting, followed by an armada of golfers and carts. The "intravenous bot-

tlers" of fertilizer and other soil conditioners can never be turned off, and should some virulent "infection" invade the course in the form of fungus, insects, drought, etc., the superintendent cannot let the "patient" recover through bed rest. He is lucky if he can keep carts on paths, let alone golfers off the course to let it recover naturally.

Each year stories circulate of how a superintendent has been fired because the "Course didn't measure up." Seldom do we hear of those who overcame tremendous odds and did keep the course in great condition, and almost never do we hear of course officials recognizing what may have caused the course not to measure up without pointing a finger at the superintendent. The common cold can remain uncured, but superintendents can have nothing short of perfection.

There are those who contend that all of this is what the superintendent gets paid for, and few superintendents would argue that particular point. What they might like to add, given the opportunity, is that should the "patient" suffer a setback or lose some vitality, conditions other than the superintendent's abilities and actions should also be given consideration. Superintendents are professionals not magicians and they can only perform minor miracles, regardless of budget golfers' desires and demands or other factors.

Although there may be a few charlatans in the business, superintendents over-all are more interested and aware of the conditions of their course than any golfer, professional or amateur, could ever pretend to be. If you wouldn't tell a doctor how to remove an unsightly wart, why should golfers assume so much knowledge and tell the superintendent how to perform his responsibilities?



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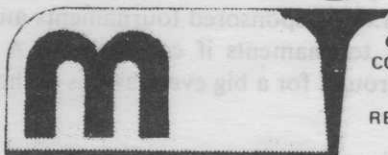
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New Systematic Chemicals Need Careful Attention

Iowa Golf Course Reporter

If what the researchers say about systematic fungicides is true, most of us need to take a broader view of their usage than we now have. Joe Vargas of Michigan State and Richard Smiley of Cornell have done considerable research on the systemics and their writings are covered in brief here.

1. Systemics do not control all diseases, in fact are quite selective.
2. They control dollar spot very well and do a good job on stripe smut and Fusarium blight.
3. They are not effective against Pythium and Helminthosporium and quite a number of others. Brown Patch is questionable.
4. Fungal organisms can develop a resistance to the systemics, so should not be used continually as a contact spray as repeated applications.
5. The most efficient use of the systemics is when they are applied as drenches and the chemical is taken up gradually through the roots. HOW? Apply and water in at once with 1/2 to one inch of water.
6. Systemics should be used very infrequently and just ahead of expected outbreaks or just after the disease has been noted.
7. A soil drench in early to mid-June and in late August or September alternated with use of contact spray material between should be a reasonable type program.
8. Use of LSR for early leaf spot should suffice for May. Daconil or equal should take care of early dollar spot if it shows up. You have the ball!



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Fifty-Five Years of Experience

by William M. Dest, Conn. Clippings

Who can boast of 55 years of experience in golf course maintenance? This is the number of years the U.S.G.A. Green Section has been in existence collecting and distributing information of value on golf course maintenance to golf clubs around the country. The numbers of visits made to golf clubs over the years by Green Section agronomists are too innumerable to count. The myriad of problems and solutions rendered would easily fill a volume of books.

Most of us are familiar with the visitation service to golf clubs that the Green Section offers for on the course consultation. This is unique to the Green Section but is only part of the story.

The U.S.G.A. Green Section has also supported turf-grass research since its formation. The results of this research have been evaluated impartially by Green Section agronomists ultimately benefitting all golf courses whether member clubs of the Green Section or not. Improved grasses (how many can remember the old pie shaped greens?), fertilization concepts, thatch control, and specifications for putting green construction along with the soil testing service are but a very few examples of results born out of research sponsored by the Green Section.

The Green Section periodical now known as the U.S.G.A. Green Section Record has been published since 1921. How many remember the Eastern Turfletter with its timely tips. Other publications have been written as the need arose. "Turf Diseases and Their Control" by Monteith and Dahl, 1932, was a classic in its time. "Building Golf Holes for Good Turf Management" by the Green Section Staff and on and on the list goes. It publishes the ever popular book, "Golf Course

Management." The resource material for ready use by all its inexhaustible.

The Section holds its own conference on Golf Course Management each year in conjunction with the U.S.G.A. annual meeting in New York. Green Section agronomists participate in regional and national Turf Conferences and at local Golf Course Superintendent Association meetings throughout the country. On occasion section agronomists will attend local meetings and conferences spending time in discussions and consultation with Golf Course Superintendents.

The Section Agronomist consult on golf course preparation for U.S.G.A. sponsored tournaments and will assist in P.G.A. tournaments if called upon. A great service to have around for a big event as this author will testify.

Consultation by telephone is always available. If the Agronomist is not in his office at the time you call, you can be sure your call will be answered promptly as soon as he returns.

Eight agronomist presently serve 800 of the 4000 plus U.S.G.A. Member Clubs throughout the United States. The Greens Section seeks only to cover its cost of operation, yet the small service fee covers just part of the cost. For the Green Section to carry out its mission to the fullest, it needs the support of every golf club.

The Green Section has made a solid contribution to the field of golf course maintenance and management. It functions solely in the interest of better turf for better golf. Most of us I'm sure will agree that experience is a good teacher. The U.S.G.A. Green Section accumulated 55 years of it.

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Cutback— A Curse or A Blessing

From New England Newsletter

Indeed, in these times of economic turmoil, it has come about that "cutback" is the most commonly-used word in discussions of budgets in any form and at any level. Naturally, the cutback of golf budgets has been proposed and in some cases, put into practice.

In 90 percent of logical response to putting the scissors to expenditures on the golf course, it has come to the point where the golfer must ask himself: "What is it I desire in the condition of the course and how much am I willing to pay for it?"

In the conditioning process, the superintendent can cut back on expenses, only if the golfer will accept what amounts to a "new" playing area. Less grooming equals higher scores. And is the golfer going to be able to live with such a situation?

The cutback in financial outlay would be a cutback in labor and materials necessary to retain the present playing quality of the golf course. And, in most clubs, both members and superintendents don't really know whether it is a curse or a blessing.

What would happen in a straight swipe at the budget is this: Roughs wouldn't be cut as frequently as they are, hazards would be left to roam in growth, banks and entrances to hazards would not be mowed or developed into escape hatches, cuts of collars, aprons and the like would be minimized. In general, the golf course would take on the old natural look . . . and with it a tougher look.

The returns in savings would be something for members to think over twice. There would be a reduction in part-time labor (probably the most pronounced saving), there would be less strain on equipment . . . thereby resulting in less frequent replacement of same and breakdowns of it would shrink because of unstrained use.

There is sound logic in the statement that "overspending is a direct relative of overgrooming." And from the incidence of overgrooming, perhaps members would accept a "new" playing area.

A USGA spokesman, though, isn't so sure certain golfers will accept this form of comedown. "There is always that competition among clubs as far as condition of the course goes," he offered. "They may not want to be 'outgroomed' by a rival course. So, it really means it's up to the members."

On the other hand, there is some support for cutback in grooming and a return to the tighter, natural form of golf course. In the past 30 years most emphasis has been on providing the golfer with both the equipment and



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well-manicured course in order that he come away from it with a smile on his face and low numbers on his scorecard.

"It may not set too well with the ego-maniacs," is one reaction to slowing down the golf track. "Some golfers are determined to keep their handicaps at figures they compiled 10 and 20 years ago. So, if the course becomes tougher, there's no way they can keep those figures. Next, they may not want to live with them which means they'll want the same playing conditions as provided for in the original budget."

It's obvious that a period of adjustment lies ahead for both the superintendent and the member should the country club agree to a practical form of cutback in conditioning the course and the member, in turn, will have to be aware of the consequences stemming from those limitations.

Then, again, a cutback could result in a better game all-around for everyone. It definitely is a case of individual taste and individual need, combined with the realization that the budget figure coincides with both. Cutback? To some it's a curse, to others a blessing.

Gerry Finn

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