

BRINGING OUR ROOTS BACK TO THE FUTURE

Do you remember watching the British Open on television this year? Can you remember how brown the golf course appeared?

I remembered asking my green committee chairman the next day what he thought about the conditions and he quickly responded, "Deplorable!"

That adjective sounds a little harsh, but let's face it: courses in America are commonly wall-to-wall green and kept in impeccable condition.

Perhaps a little too impeccable.

Maybe our Scottish forefathers are ahead of the game, while we are out there digging our own graves. Just how long can we continue to overproduce?

Let's be honest. American golf courses are maintained too well and

everyone's at fault. We as superintendents strive to make our golf course better every year. When will we reach our limit? What about American golfers? Are they getting spoiled? We hear them complain about those things we

Perhaps it's time to look back across the Pond, where superintendents have been nurturing the game of golf for centuries. Maybe they have been ahead of the game all along while we have been digging our graves.

do for our own good like aerifying, top dressing, verticutting and so on.

Those Scotsmen do far less and are far better off. And I mean no disrespect: they've got this business figured out far better than we do.

Many American golfers travel from place to place, playing each golf course

at its peak level of maintenance. Our members travel from north to south, expecting perfection at each stop along the way. Member-guest tournaments compound the problem. If the course down the road has something special, you can sure bet that your members will have you doing the same thing in the very near future.

And what about touring pros?

Is there such a thing as a silver spoon? Is the American touring pro spoiled? We hear of foreign pros playing more competitively because

they are more familiar with normal world conditions. Again, are we spoiling our pros with fast greens, tight fairways and so on?

It's got so bad that now we hear TV commentators discussing "roll of the fairways!"

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EMPLOYMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

SALARY: \$2,329 - 2,830 /
month (plus PERS)

FINAL FILING DATE:
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THE POSITION: Under direction, performs a variety of skilled and semi-skilled golf course maintenance and construction activities; operates equipment pertaining to tasks; performs the more difficult aspects of golf course maintenance and repair.

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of: Plant identification and propagation; tools and materials used in golf course maintenance, construction and repair; operation of equipment.

Skill to: Read and write legibly; understand and follow oral and written directions; safely operate hand and power tools, and equipment needed to perform assigned tasks.

Experience: Two years of full-time, paid experience in golf course maintenance.

License: Possession of appropriate, valid California driver's license at the time of appointment, and an acceptable driving record as determined by the City of Livermore.

Certification: Must be able to obtain a valid State of California, Department of Food and Agriculture, Qualified Applicator Certificate by the end of the first year of employment.

SUPERS URGED TO BACK THEIR MECHANICS

Superintendents should support their mechanics as they attempt to form professional associations around the country, according to a speaker at the GCSAA convention in Orlando, Fla. in February 1990.

There are a handful of regional mechanics associations, mostly in the Southeast. Organizers of the mechanics session hope their efforts will encourage mechanics in other regions to form their own associations, which could one day lead to a national organization, like the GCSAA.

"An association is formed by individuals with a common interest. Golf course mechanics need a forum to express themselves and exchange ideas on equipment maintenance and repair. The entire industry and superintendents at the individual courses will

benefit from mechanics joining and participating in an association," said Bruce Williams, superintendent of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill.

From a superintendents' viewpoint there are many advantages to having a mechanics' association.

"The role of the mechanic has changed with the growing complexity of equipment. We need educated, trained technicians to run them. Better-trained mechanics means less down time for equipment. Well-running equipment makes for a happy superintendent and a happy superintendent makes for a good working environment."

But having a mechanic who is active in an association comes at a cost to the superintendent—a direct cost in dues

and educational expenses and a time cost when the mechanic is away at meetings and seminars. Since that time and money aren't available without the superintendent's blessing, there are things the mechanic can do to gain his boss' support:

- Give the superintendent plenty of notice for an upcoming meeting, explain what you expect to learn and report back on what you learned after the meeting.
- Hold meetings at appropriate times
- Discuss appropriate topics at appropriate places.
- Don't use meetings simply as a gripe session

Article seen in Golf Course News, April 1990

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Where is it going to end? Even the commentators are spoiled. Sure, they give us a lot of respect and credit when they compliment the golf course, but the point is, they are calling attention to the very best-conditioned courses in the world.

Is this whole golf business heading in the right direction? Have you ever really thought about what golf will be like in the year 2010? I'm not talking about laser golf with high-tech clubs; I'm talking about the green stuff we play on. We dream of drought-tolerant, heat-resistant, special grasses that we haven't even seen yet. In reality, things might be completely different from what we now envision.

First, let's assume money always will be available to support the top-level clubs. Twenty years from now, money might not even be an issue anywhere.

Instead, the issues might be water

availability and banned chemicals. Golfers may have to adapt to brown, dry turf, weeds, and insect damage.

In 20 years, we might be irrigating greens and tees just three times a week and fairways only once a week. Perhaps by then man will have consumed or polluted so much of his fresh water sources that the precious remainder will not be available for golf course at any price.

Lush, wall-to-wall green may be a distant memory.

You've heard of organic gardening. What would it be like to manage a golf course the organic way? That's right; no pesticides of any sort! Environmentalists and government regulations will have virtually eliminated all the current pesticides except those which are so safe as to be ineffective.

If for no reason other than political reality, the current restricted pesticides that combat nematodes and mole crickets will be long gone and these insect pests will abound in numbers

we have not yet seen. (The Rules of Golf may even permit a golfer to knock down mole cricket mounds in his line.)

And as for weeds, they will be prevalent everywhere. The current herbicides on the market will be long gone. We could contemplate pulling weeds by hand, but labor cost make clean golf course prohibitively expensive. It will be easier just to let the weeds grow because, after all, everybody will have them.

As a matter of fact, we might even play winter rules and roll the ball onto a clump of weeds because at least they offer a better lie than sand.

What about these new so-called low-maintenance golf course that architects currently are creating with abrupt mounds, huge bunkers, and excessive fields of love grass? Somebody out there is going to get rich modifying all these modern monuments to the way they should have been constructed in the first place.

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HOW THE EPCRA WORKS IN CALIFORNIA

As a response to growing concerns about the effects of chemical releases on communities, the U.S. Congress enacted the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA) in 1986. The act supports state and local emergency planning efforts and provides citizens and local governments with information concerning potential chemical hazards present in their communities by requiring reports from businesses — including golf courses — that deal with hazardous chemicals.

California's Hazardous Material Release Response Plans and Inventory law requires businesses with specified quantities of hazardous materials to develop emergency contingency plans. The law was amended in 1988 to mesh state business plan requirements with federal EPCRA requirements.

The California Office of Emergency Services administers the law. Each county must implement the law except where a city has assumed responsibility

and has exclusive jurisdiction. The city ordinance must contain business reporting requirements similar to or more restrictive than the state law, and the city must notify the county of its ordinance and coordinate efforts to avoid duplication.

The law covers all employers that store or use hazardous substances. Golf Course operations that use or store a hazardous substance or a mixture containing a hazardous substance equal to or exceeding 500 pounds, 55 gallons or 200 cubic feet of compressed gas must develop a business plan. Additionally, any facility with an extremely hazardous substance that exceeds the chemical's threshold planning quantity must develop a business plan.

Business plans must include:

- chemical inventory list
- emergency response plans
- evacuation plans
- procedures for the mitigation of a release
- employee training programs

Business plans are subject to biennial review. Individuals reviewing the business plans are granted immunity from liability for damages or injuries resulting from an inadequate or negligent review of the plan. Any business plan revisions must be reported to the administering agency.

Releases or threatened releases of a hazardous substance must be reported immediately to the administering agency. Any business required under EPCRA to submit follow-up notification of a release must do so on forms approved by the California Office of Emergency Services.

Any employer who fails to file a business plan may be assessed a civil

penalty not to exceed \$2,000 per day. Any employer who fails to report a release or threatened release may be fined \$25,000 per day of violation, and for subsequent convictions for release non-reporting, the employer may be fined up to \$50,000 per day.

If a violation contributes to an emergency response activity, including a fire, the business is also responsible for the full cost of the county or city emergency response and the costs of cleaning up and disposing of the hazardous materials.

A reward of up to \$5,000 is available for any person who provides information contributing to the assessment of civil penalties for noncompliance.

RELATED LAWS

Proposition 65, the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act, prohibits the discharge of chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity. Proposition 65 also requires employers, including golf courses, to provide the public with a clear and reasonable warning of chemicals in products that may cause cancer or reproductive toxicity.

Further regulations have been proposed to expand the list of chemicals covered under Proposition 65 and to clarify the warning requirement.

An air toxins law, known as the Hot Spots Law, requires facilities to submit biennially a proposed emission inventory plan for on-site hazardous substances reportable under a state-developed list.

COMMUNITY RIGHT-TO-KNOW CONTACTS

For emergency release notification, call 800/852-7550.

For general information, call the Office of Emergency Services at 916/
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On the other hand, maybe we can prepare to the future now, since the change is inevitable and superintendents will be virtually powerless in its wake. Pesticides will be banned no matter how many lobbyists we employ. Golfers are going to have to accept that fact.

Those Scottish chaps have not nurtured the game of golf for centuries by accident. They have something to teach us. Perhaps the way back to the future lies on the other side of the Big Pond.

Article by Mike Bailey, Superintendent at The Falls CC, Lake Worth, Florida. As seen in *The Florida Green*, Winter 1990.