

USGA

A Difficult Position To Fill

By Mike Huck, Agronomist, USGA Green Section, Western Region


Common Complaints I hear from many a superintendent during my travels re, "We can't seem to keep a good mechanic" or, "I've been advertising for a mechanic for two months and can't get any applicants!" Yes, it seems that many golf operations have difficulty finding and keeping a good mechanic.

No one can argue that turf equipment has and will likely continue to become more complicated with each passing year. Consequently, the qualifications and skills needed to maintain and repair this equipment have changed considerably. Taking into account the prices and complexity of equipment nowadays, golf courses can no longer afford to hire a person who can "just keep things going." A skilled mechanic is now an essential. More correctly stated, Golf course equipment repairs require a qualified equipment technician! Technicians are more than "parts changers," they are professionals that can diagnose and repair engines, as well as a multitude of systems dealing with hydraulics, fuel, cooling, safety, electrical, and now even computer components. Often, they are gifted fabricators who manufacture parts or modify equipment to improve the performance over that of the original manufacturer's design. Many keep detailed service and repair records on personal computers that can be used to justify the purchase of supplies or replacement of equipment that has served its useful life span.

Unfortunately, it seems many golf courses have not kept pace with compensa-

tion levels to attract a qualified person. Superintendents claim that their course officials will not allow them to pay a good mechanic more money. I suggest asking these decision makers if they feel a \$10 or \$15 per hour individual is qualified to repair their personal luxury vehicle valued at \$30,000 or more? I seriously doubt they would. So why would their golf course only offer this level of compensation for a position that maintains turf equipment valued at this and higher levels?

Just as often, I find an older maintenance facility with such poor working conditions it becomes difficult to keep a good worker. Many older maintenance facilities I've seen are just plain awful. Grave yards, poor lighting, inadequate storage, work areas, . . . the list goes on and on! (How many auto repair shops in this condition would your club officials take their luxury cars to?) New facilities with asphalt yards, equipment lifts, and well-lit work areas can entice an otherwise happy employee to leave. You have to honestly ask yourself, "Would I be willing to spend eight hours a day working under these conditions?" This may be another good question to have the decision-makers at your course ask themselves!

To attract and keep a good technician you need to offer a fair and reasonable compensation package, provide the best work environment possible, and keep their skills up-to-date by sending them to training seminars. After that, it is up to the superintendent to keep an open line of communications with the technician and treat them with the respect shown other professionals. 

To The Man In The Arena

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

— Teddy Roosevelt —

Naumann's NorCal News

Terry Stratton is the new Superintendent at the Little River Inn Golf Course in Little River, California. Terry was the Superintendent at Contra Costa CC many years ago but decided to do other things within the industry before recently returning as Superintendent. . . **Carl King** is the new Superintendent at Tehama Ridge GC in Monterey. Tehama Ridge is a new course and is still under construction. Carl was the Superintendent at Bermuda Dunes CC in Palm Springs area prior to moving up to Northern California . . . **Randy Gai** is extremely busy these days. Claremont CC is installing an extensive fairway drainage system a new irrigation system and cart paths.



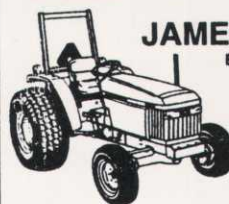
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