

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SUPERINTENDENTS

It's the little things that separate a good golf course from a great one, and a good superintendent from a great one. Here are some tips, as seen through the eyes of our country's more astute superintendents.

by Jerry Roche, editor-in-chief

Anyone can grow grass, says one noted golf course superintendent. But not anyone can become a successful superintendent simply because he or she can grow grass.

As has been said before, in this magazine and at many educational seminars around the country, being a golf course superintendent means mastering several very diverse disci-

plines from weed management to equipment repair. But sometimes even that isn't enough; sometimes it takes a keen imagination, the ability to implement plans and to prioritize.

Planting annual flowers, for instance. Down in the Palm Springs, Calif. area where Jeff Markow is superintendent at The Vintage Club, it's not uncommon to see annual color. Markow's crews plant 80,000 flowers

each year.

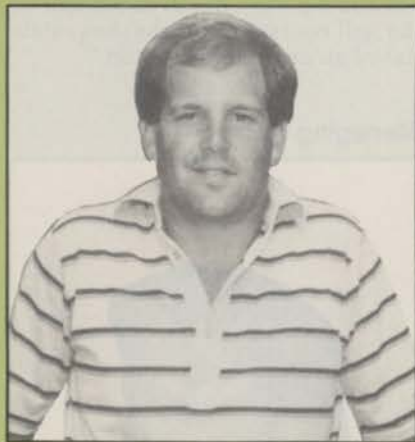
Markow likes to instill the credo "no grass blade out of place" in his crew members as the course seeks perfection in all it does. "We promote that feeling within the crew to the point where they care about the course and where it's not just a job to them," Marko says.

Other things work in other parts of the country.



Jeff Markow and the crew at The Vintage Club in Palm Springs take pride in the 5,000 flats of annuals they plant each year. Among the most popular: petunias, pansies, snapdragons, impatiens, cyclamens and alyssums.

People management



Stanley Reedy

"If your membership likes you, you'll be successful," says Stanley Reedy of Castlewoods Country Club, Jackson, Miss. "The closer you get to your members, the better you'll understand them. Getting out and playing the course with them is a big thing.

"Members know what they want, so you've also got to be honest with them and tell them what you can and can't do."



Bob Randquist

Bob Randquist of Southern Hills Golf & Country Club concurs. "You have to be highly visible—there are times that's not always pleasant," he says. "You can be around them *too* much, but there's a middle ground there somewhere.

"You also have to work with people in things like hiring and motivation. A lot of it takes time and experience, and many times you can't do it by yourself. Eighty percent of my crew has been here at least six years."

Randquist notes that being around when you're needed is a key.

"Some supers like to get away when things get rough, go chasing engine parts or something. But that's not what we're getting paid for."

Proper education



D.J. Pakkala

D.J. Pakkala, of International Golf Management in Carmel, Calif., thinks having one man in charge of many courses is becoming a common job description.

Today, college training is an important first step for turf managers.

"The business is now so technical," says Pakkala. "You're more involved with the environment, more familiar with the laws that have to do with chemicals and their effects on the environment. I don't think there's any other way of being successful in the business without having been trained in a college or university."

Fine-tuning greens



David Stone

David Stone at The Honors Course, Ooltewah, Tenn. has his crews spend extra time on and around the greens. "Every golfer—no matter how bad—has to play the greens," he says. "They might miss the fairways, but they've got to play the greens."

Stone and his crews take extra pride in keeping collars uniform from hole to hole. They use a specially-built bar on their greensmowers to assure the uniformity. And, during the hot months, greens are constantly checked for soil moisture to keep them uniformly firm.

Sand traps are also hand-raked instead of machine-raked. Crew members responsible for hand-mowing greens take leaf rakes along.

Chain of command



Joe Hahn

"We have a system set up with qualified people," says Joe Hahn of Oakhill (N.Y.) Country Club. "I surround myself with people interested in the business who have a desire to move up themselves. I have a superintendent on each course that I try to keep for about three years; I always have a college graduate underneath them waiting to take their place, and a couple of turf students during the summer on each course.

"There are five guys who have gone out as superintendents on their own in my eight years here."

Prioritizing



Ted Horton

"We try to get most of our jobs set up in order of priority according to what the membership wants," notes Ted Horton of Westchester Country Club, Rye, N.Y.

"We've always got a list of 'honeydew' items—crazy things you want to get done for the members—and we've been nibbling away at it for years."

Horton talks about first impression areas. "We periodically go through and look out all the building windows, to see things the members see."

People like to see the little changes we make."

Westchester also enlisted Reece Jones & Associates to provide a master plan with a list of minor projects "we're ready to roll on." Included are long-range planting and long- and short-range tree maintenance plans.

"We were also one of the first courses involved in fairway triplex mowing, which was popular with the membership. We rode that crest for a few years," Horton notes.

Ornamental grasses



John Moorman

Hillcrest Country Club in Batesville, Ind. was one of the first courses in the country to use ornamental grasses in its landscape. The move has paid dividends for superintendent John Moorman.

"We've used thousands of ornamental grasses over the years," he says. "They've really set us apart and have gotten a lot of response. They give the course sort of a Scottish look."

Moorman points out that ornamen-

tal grasses are neither costly nor labor-intensive.

"They're perennials; we've had some of them for nine years. You just cut them off at ground level in the early spring and watch them grow."

Moorman says that a two-gallon container will cost \$6 to \$8. Hillcrest uses up to three containers in each planting hole, but if you're willing to wait a couple of years for the grasses to propagate, one container per hole is plenty.

Emphasizing beauty



Don Sweda

"We emphasize the beauty and scenery of the course," observes Don Sweda of Beechmont Country Club, Cleveland, Ohio. "When a person has to wait on a hole, if his overall surroundings are pleasant, then it turns into a pleasant experience."

Sweda's crews work extra hard on the entranceway, heeding the old adage "You only get one chance to

make a first impression." He says that "before a person has even set foot on the golf course, he (or she) has established an overall impression."

Managing water



Bill Knox

"It's very critical to be a judicious user of water," notes Bill Knox of Greystone Golf Club, Birmingham, Ala. "Using water wisely improves turf quality, density and looks, plus it's money- and labor-saving."

The first step toward being a wise water user is "hands-on, out in the field," Knox says. "You've got to continually monitor soil moisture with a soil probe and then plug it into your computer."

Communicating with your irrigation distributor is an important key, too. Knox bought his Toro 8000 water management system for his deep-South bentgrass greens from Turf Care Products in Birmingham. **LM**

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