

STRICTLY GOLF

The magic touch: people relations

Don't let agronomy get lost in the shuffle, but hone your interpersonal skills to get the most out of your management position.

■ "There's a little magical touch you need in this business, and that's working with people."

So says Jerry Coldiron Jr., certified golf course superintendent at Boone Links/Lassing Pointe Golf Courses in hilly little Florence, Ky., just across the majestic Ohio River from Cincinnati.

"Problems arise mostly out of personality breakdowns," Coldiron observes. And he should know: as manager of 27 public holes (due to expand to 45), he's got different personalities coming at him from all angles:

- Coldiron not only reports to the county administrator, but also tunes in to the suggestions of a citizen's advisory panel that meets twice a year specifically to discuss the golf course.

- His full-time permanent staff numbers 12, including two assistant superintendents. Either Coldiron, Jerry Thiery at Boone Links or Greg Bulmer at the new Lassing Pointe, is "on call" at any one time.

Staff meetings are held "religiously" every two weeks. "We listen, we talk, we encourage the guys to open up," Coldiron continues. "You have to interpret what people are saying, though, and then follow through. We've made a ton of improvements that have come from the employees. I provide the tools and let them be creative."

- He hires up to 40 seasonal employees who work 15 to 30 hours per week. Many of them are senior citizens, but some are not.

"I spend an awful lot of time researching people," Coldiron notes. "We use a lot of referrals. I've got two co-op students now. We try to recruit, very seldom put ads in the newspaper. And we're still lucky enough to get some people coming off farms with a real good work ethic."

- He and golf professional Jeff

- As a past president of the Greater Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents Association and board member of the Kentucky Turfgrass Association, he's come in contact with a wide variety of people he can rely on for answers to questions. "People are great in this industry," Coldiron observes. "To my knowledge,



Jerry Coldiron, Jr. trusts in the talents and ideas of his crew. Staff meetings are held every two weeks. "We encourage the guys to open up," he says.

Kruempelman operate as a team, and have for 13 years.

"We pretty much overlap responsibilities on the general operation," says Coldiron. "He'll ask my opinion on golf as much as I'll ask about grounds. We'll meet once or twice a week. We'll sit down and do budgets together; we trade off monitoring utilities and fuel. We divide up whatever makes sense.

"When we can't agree on something—which is very seldom—we go to the county administrator."

there are no secrets. I use the university people (Dr. Dwight Barkley of Eastern Kentucky University and Dr. A.J. Powell of the University of Kentucky) as much as anybody else in town."

The basics—Coldiron admits that he spends just 15-20 percent of his time on agronomics, but that doesn't mean that he's not emphasizing the course's beauty and health.

"They're very important," he says. "That's the first way a guy loses his job is

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if he forgets the basics. And lately, things have gotten real goofy: mowing heights, PGRs, playing golf all season."

One of the keys to keeping the course maintained is head mechanic Tom Woodall, who Coldiron calls "the single most important person on the golf course."

Woodall and his assistant are in charge of maintaining four tractors, half-a-dozen

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—Jerry Coldiron, Jr.

riding triplex mowers, four "five-plex" fairway mowers and 10 work carts. "We've got state-of-the-art equipment," Coldiron notes, "mostly Toro and Jacobsen."

Boone Links also leases 105 Club Car carts, and will contract for about 70 more when Lassing Pointe opens next spring.

Growing out—When LM visited Boone Links, the new 18-hole Lassing Pointe course was being grown in.

"Its design (by architect Michael Hurdzan) and construction was an exciting process," Coldiron notes. "It's a fabulous project. It could be one of the top five public courses opening in the U.S. next year."

Lassing Pointe was financed by bonds; Boone Links is self-supporting. The courses have a combined maintenance budget of \$1.6 million. And success has contributed to growth. "We've been so successful because we've never used tax dollars except for the feasibility study conducted for Lassing Pointe in 1991."

The key to its success always comes back to working with people, Coldiron reminds us.

"This is not brain surgery," he says. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist. We strive to make everything pleasant, to serve the public without worrying about our own problems. These are things you teach yourself."

—Jerry Roche

GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE

Grinding, sharpening blades

■ Grinding and sharpening to mate the reel and bedknife of your greensmower are the two most important processes in the mower maintenance program, according to Tim Moraghan of the USGA Green Section.

You should grind blades whenever a new knife is used, after topdressing and on a biweekly schedule throughout the mowing season, he says. Grinding should be followed by backlapping, the fine sharpening and mating of the bedknife to the reel using a fine grit, emory-based compound.

When you purchase a bedknife, consider the following, Moraghan says:

1) There are three levels of bedknife thickness: regular, thin and championship. The lower the cutting height, the thinner the knife.

2) Use bedknives made of factory-recommended hardened steel.

3) Check for bends in the bedknives prior to purchase.

4) Match the mower brand with the bedknife.

5) Remove the paint on the bottom of the bedknife before mowing.

6) Check that all mounting screws are flush with the bottom of the bedknife prior to mowing.

Water use on committee's agenda

■ Water usage studies are on the agenda of the GCSAA Scholarship & Research foundation's projects.

The studies would document actual water usage rates on golf courses around the country and compare them to other agricultural and industrial uses. They are scheduled to begin in the next five to 10 years.

Other projects scheduled are: a national study of the economic impact of golf courses and golf course maintenance; bird

and wildlife studies that would document the impact of maintenance practices on animals; and risk assessment studies to determine the actual pesticide exposure of golf course workers.

The University of Iowa's College of Medicine has been selected for the risk assessment study. Team leader is Iowa's Dr. Burton Kross. The initial study will focus on superintendents who have managed golf courses in the past 23 years.

Nelson gets 'Old Tom' Award

■ One of the greatest golfers of all time, Byron Nelson, will receive the Old Tom Morris Award from the GCSAA.

"There is probably not a nicer man in golf," says GCSAA president Randy Nichols. "Even though he officially retired from the pro tour nearly 50 years ago, he constantly gives all that he can back to the game."

The GCSAA established the Old Tom Morris Award in 1982 to recognize individ-

uals who have made outstanding lifetime contributions to the game.

Nelson won the Masters in 1937 and 1942, the U.S. Open in 1939, and the PGA Championship in 1940 and 1945. In 1945, he set a PGA Tour record of 11 consecutive victories, and finished with 18 for the season. His namesake PGA Tour event, the GTE Byron Nelson Classic, has brought more than 25 years of goodwill to Dallas, Texas.

Send your idea or opinion to:

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