

# Defeating the 'Rodney Dangerfield Syndrome'

by Arthur Jamison

■ Although I have been in this business for 10 years, I realize that there is still a lot to learn. But the one thing that continues to really bother me, and that is the basic lack of respect for the superintendent as a professional.

Golf course superintendents must be experts at fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, turfgrass, weather and planning. Add other topics and hundreds of subtopics, and we have more to manage than the average person could possibly imagine.

One day, we are involved in the decision of where we should spend \$500,000 in improvements, whereas the next day we're fixing the toilet paper holder in the restroom by the No. 14 green.

I certainly did not write my thesis in college on professionalism. Yet it doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that the golf course superintendent *does* belong among the top management personnel in his club.

Exactly where in the hierarchy does he belong? Should he be above the manager, above the PGA professional? Perhaps, perhaps not. But I know one thing: if a club had to operate without one key person, it would not be the superintendent.

So let's get back to the superintendent as a professional.

How do your members, department heads and golfers look at you? As the guy with the shovel in his hand? Or do they see you as the guy who has the secret ingredient for making grass grow?

**A parable**—I was told this story by one of my teachers in college (who, by the way, had his master's degree in horticulture):

After he'd graduated, he was working for his father, who owned one of the largest landscaping firms in the San Francisco Bay area. He was servicing an account one day and saw a flower bed that needed some weeding. As he was bent over pulling weeds, he overheard two businessmen comment that if this laborer would have graduated from high school he might have been able to acquire a better job.

What a perfect scenario for us superintendents! How many times have you gotten "that look" from a golfer? ("The poor guy; if he had at least finished high

school...") And I think, "how wrong you are." I am outdoors all day thoroughly enjoying myself, and making damn good crispies to boot!

I once had a golfer ask me why I was planting flowers in October. He literally laughed at me while informing me that they would be dead by winter's end. I intended to inform him that this flower was a pansy and could survive the winter, but the man was gone before I could explain.

Where's the respect?

How do you explain your profession? Well, I'm still learning, and this last year has taught me a lot.

**Number one**—is communication. Talk with your department heads, members, men's and women's golf associations, golf and green committees. Let all that knowledge inside your gray matter spill out. Take the opportunity, when asked a question, to show that you are not just an overpaid weed-puller.

(But don't buffalo them. That doesn't help anyone. If you don't know, tell them you will find out and follow through.)

I have had the opportunity to explain certain problems we are having on the golf course, and people have responded respectfully because I know what I'm talking about.

We have the opportunity each day to talk to anyone in the club from the dishwashers to the president of the men's golf association. What opportunities to show

ourselves off!

**Number two**—is the golf course. If you have all the knowledge of a turfgrass guru, but your members are putting over crabgrass, you'll have a respect problem. The golf course is a huge picture we get to paint every day. You can get a lot of respect if you use the proper colors.

We have a way to go yet before we're accorded the same respect as the medical profession. But my attitude has changed. Instead of being sarcastic and reactionary in a situation, I fall back on my knowledge as a golf course superintendent—or, if I don't know the answer, I call a colleague.

I bet I've made four or five phone calls to other superintendents in the last six months wanting information. I've always learned something I didn't know before. Never did I feel they didn't have the time to talk to me.

One thing that has evolved from all of this is that more people are coming to me for advice or information. More and more frequently, I am getting flagged down on the golf course to answer questions. It makes me feel that all these years of hard work are paying off.

Pay me \$100,000 a year and I'll feel good, but give me a little respect and I'll feel like a king.

—Arthur Jamison  
is golf course  
superintendent at  
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Country Club in  
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zine of the Georgia  
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## \$100 for your opinions, observations

■ Do you have an opinion or observation on the art/science/profession of being a golf course superintendent?

Every month, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT will publish a super's view of the industry as part of its "Strictly Golf" section.

We are soliciting the opinions/observations of golf course superintendents, much like those expressed by Arthur Jamison this month.

Topics can range from professionalism to employee relations to greensmower selection to treating turf diseases. Or anything in between that is of value to your fellow superintendents.

If you have such an idea you wish to express, type it, double-spaced, on plain white paper, 750 words or less. Send it, along with your Social Security number and a recent photo, to:

**"Strictly Golf"**

**LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT**

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