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## Too Many Cooks In Golf

The superintendent in question and on the scene, too, was having himself a helping of fire-eating thought. "You know," he fumed, "one thing I've learned in life is to stay out of the kitchen. But apparently a lot of golfers haven't realized that too many cooks spoil the broth. At least, certain of them don't know the difference between assuming responsibility and letting it slip away from them."

The occasion of country club boards of governors following the too-many-cooks route usually happens around the end of the golf season. Too often they bring their decision-making into the 19th hole or - much worse - to the dinner table at home. So, the question arises as to who is running the show, anyway?

Because the act of making a decision and holding to it involves a strain on personal relationships and plain popularity with the rest of the membership, being on a board of governors, directors or whatever carries an obligation to a number of people and to a number of causes. It is not a post for the weak.

What the superintendent would like to bring about in his relationship with those who approve or disapprove his methods of conditioning the course is an orderly, if not firm understanding of what their ideas on the matter are. Too often the super is forced to operate on a whim rather than a solid, thought-out decision.

The whim, as such, can originate in a number of places. One of those is the 19th hole where golfers gather to replay their rounds and sometimes reshape the operation methods of the superintendent. "If it's happened once it's happened a thousand times," is a popular cry of the super. "I've just completed mowing the greens and some member of the board thinks they should be 1/32nd of an inch shorter. And, in my position, I'm required to make another cut. I know where such foolishness started. A few members get to talking and before you know it, the board member gets trapped into accepting their opinions on how the course should be groomed."

It's obvious that many members have become acquainted with some of the conditioning techniques, products and other tools the super uses on the job. The task of keeping the grass green and the putting surfaces smooth has become so sophisticated and complicated that the member feels duty-bound to become an instant expert in the field. And it is this particular member who puts heat on the board people.

The board of governors constitutes the highest form of authority on the golf course. Therefore, its actions and conduct should equal the esteem in which the position is held. Sorry to say but certain board members - probably locked into more pressing personal or business matters - have been known to let their families relieve them of country club chores.

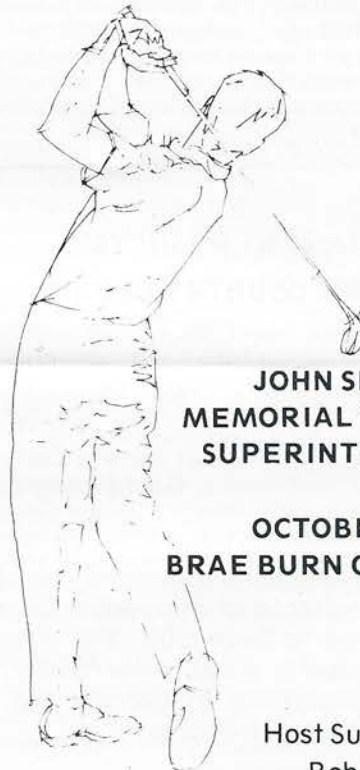
This is not to suggest that women (i.e. wives) are not capable of performing the duties of a board member. But it is to suggest that they should not have a strong voice in critical decisions involving the operation of the club. . . whether it be in the clubhouse, pro shop or on the course. . . when they haven't been elected or appointed to do so. To lean on a family relationship is a discredit to the board member and a disservice to the club.

What is being said here is that the board of governors should get

away from dependence on others and do the job without procrastination and pussyfoot stalling. And. . . the authority the title encompasses. . . must not be delegated to "wives", "friends" or "business associates." Too many cooks spoil the broth and too many voices pouring orders in nine different directions can upset the superintendent to the point of exasperation and disgust. He only has two hands. . . and two ears. Why burn them?

Gerry Finn

### NEXT MEETING



**JOHN SHANAHAN  
MEMORIAL TOURNAment  
SUPERINTENDENT/PRO**

**OCTOBER 14, 1977  
BRAE BURN COUNTRY CLUB**

Host Superintendent  
Bob Grant, CGCS

Call George Wemyss at 245-5441 for starting times.

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# Golf Course Superintendents Association

## Go North, Young Man

The great trek north for a slice of a different challenge amid a picturesque setting has taken hold of many golfers of late. And one of the reasons for the sudden popularity is that granddaddy of telegraph . . . word of mouth. You go to the mountains once, let everyone know about it and all of the appeal of the experience is laid out for the masses.



Such an experience can be had in one of the budding golf meccas of Vermont - the Quechee Lakes-Woodstock area. In a matter of a few years the courses there have had the exposure to an extent where golf is beginning to be associated with the Green Mountain State just as is the firmly established sport of skiing.

It just so happens that the New England Association has a Quechee-Woodstock connection. Two former superintendents of the Bay State have packed up their talents and fled to the mountains. And the golfers, who have become attached to the Vermont scene, are most happy with their presence.

Former national and sectional president Dick Blake is deep in the process of transforming the Woodstock Country Club into one of the best conditioned layouts in the Northeast.

Just a few miles down the road from Woodstock, Ron Hansen - who prepped for the big job he now performs at several Massachusetts courses - is whipping the Highland and Lakeland spreads at Quechee Lakes into two of the finest tests anywhere. The competitive strain at Quechee is such that the New England Amateur Championship was staged there this year.

Blake's Woodstock real estate has undergone a number of changes since he arrived there. The course is a Robert Trent Jones masterpiece in that it combines the brilliance of the mountains with a runaway brook to form an interesting golfing test. There are 13 water holes in play and each issues a different type of negotiating task to the player. Comparably short at 5915

yards, Woodstock performs the double duty of providing a comfortable yet challenging golfing assignment.

The superintendent likes the idea of working under resort-private club conditions. Blake, in fact, recommends it for those members of his profession who have had crossfire action with green chairmen.

"I report to only one person at Woodstock," Blake tells. "That's the manager of the Woodstock Inn which operates the course. He and the owner, Laurence Rockefeller, are the last word in decision-making. I don't have to bother myself with flak from members even though we do have over 200 at the club."

The relationship between Blake and members can't be chilling. In a little chat with one it was revealed that Dick has brought about a marked improvement in playing conditions at Woodstock. "I'd say that in the last three years the course has improved more than 50 percent," said one obviously satisfied member.

Down at Quechee echoes of the Blake endorsement follow Hansen around the 36 holes of the Highland and Lakeland courses. Quechee is only five years old, the original 18 holes - that is. Eighteen new ones were opened two years ago to give Hansen quite a challenge in themselves.

He has responded to it, too. Both courses - with their 12 acres of pennecross greens and tees - are in tournament shape most of the time. "We cut the tees at the same height of the greens," Ron discloses. "And they've held up pretty well. My only problem is the manual watering system which is a drain on labor. But we've worked out a schedule and so far there hasn't been any foulups."

Golf in Vermont - above the more established Manchester chain of lovely courses - is making great gains. . . especial at Woodstock and Quechee. And planked smack dab in the middle of the action are two of our own - Dick Blake and Ron Hansen. Well done, men.

Gerry Finn

### TOURNAMENT RESULTS HAMPDEN COUNTRY CLUB

First Gross	Larry Bunn 74
Second Gross	Ken Mooradian 76
First Net	Bob Johnston 68
Second Net	Wayne Zoppo 69
Third Net	Burt Frederick 70
Fourth Net	Ron Kirkman 71

Would like to thank host superintendent Bob Johnston and the people of Hampden Country Club for inviting us to their club. The friendly hospitality and superb meal were really appreciated. Congratulations to Bob for the excellent condition of the golf course.

## Bylaw Amendments

The following bylaws were voted on at the last meeting.

Both proposed bylaws were passed by the membership.

### Proposed Bylaw

Page 8 - Article IV - Section 7 - Item 1

When a 25 year member retires as a Golf Course Superintendent or is permanently disabled, he becomes a Life Member. A member with less than 25 years may become a Life member at the discretion of the Board of Directors. He shall have all the privileges of the Association except to hold office. He shall not pay annual dues.

### Proposed Bylaw

Junior Associate Member

1. A Junior Associate Member shall be employed as a superintendent of a golf course and shall be primarily interested in golf course maintenance. A Junior Associate Member will not have the right to vote or hold office and shall pay the initiation fee and the annual dues established by the Association. One who has been a Junior Associate Member for three years shall automatically qualify as an Associate Member.

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## Do They Realize What They Say?

In the last several years there seems to be an increasing number of complaints from some golf pros about course conditions. These complaints cover height of cut on fairways, pin placements, and the syringing of greens during play, just to name a few. It is my opinion that many of their complaints are not justified. I do realize that these fortunate individuals who are playing for a first place prize of up to \$100,000. are out on the golf course earning a living for their families. However, there are shortcomings in every man's profession that are uncontrollable.

First let's explain the three major complaints that are heard more often. The first complaint refers to the height of cut in fairways. This past summer a PGA tournament was held at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton. This course has bluegrass fairways. Everybody in the business of growing golf course turf realizes that bluegrass fairways can not be cut as low as bentgrass fairways. They also know that it costs more to maintain bentgrass fairways than bluegrass fairways. The pros naturally prefer bentgrass fairways as they can be mowed at a lower height. The higher mowed fairway results in what the pros call a "flying lie." A "flying lie" results in naturally a shot called a "flier." What happens is that when a shot is played from a fairway mowed at a higher cut, grass is between the ball and club face at impact. The results is there is less chance to attain maximum backspin on the ball, therefore, when the ball lands on the green it has less chance of stopping.

The second complaint is pin placements. I am sure the pros sometimes feel that the person who places the cups is a very cruel and inhuman person! First of all, the golf course superintendent only locates the pin placement where he is told. The placement of pins is done by the tournament committee, usually a representative from the pro's own association.

Syringing greens during play is the third complaint heard most often. Again for those who are in the business of growing turf on a golf course know that syringing a green may save the life of that green. To "syringe a green" means to water it lightly for three to five minutes. The problem is that greens need to be "syringed" during the hot part of the day, which is right during the middle of the players round. Naturally, the results are that with water on the greens, they will putt slower until the water dries. Also to stop play for the time needed to "syringe" greens will interrupt a player's concentration.

Now that the complaints have been explained, let's look at the other side of the coin. First, as mentioned, bluegrass fairways can be maintained with less money than bentgrass fairways. The greater majority of golf courses can not afford to maintain their golf courses the way the pros expect. The money simply is not there. Maintenance costs have increased greatly the last several years and funds are not available as they were ten years ago. There are a number of factors other than money that play a part in the types of grass grown at each course. The climate, soil conditions, the water capacity that is available all must be considered by each course when deciding the type of grass they wish to grow. The amount of play, cart traffic, and size of greens can determine the way a course is maintained. Greens cut as little as one thirty-second higher and fairways cut as little as one-quarter of an inch higher will require less water and fertilizer. With many parts of the country trying to conserve water, the future will certainly bring a rationing of water on golf courses. Natural gas is used in the process of making fertilizer. This resource is

becoming scarce and expensive. The use of fertilizer on golf courses may be rationed in the future also. Again turf cut a little higher will require less water and fertilizer.

Pin placements are not picked by the superintendent. A player must realize that a pin placement should bring out the qualities of the course they are playing. Also, it must bring out the talent of each contestant. The pin placement must also reward the properly played shot from the right position. The right position is not a sandtrap or the rough around a green.

Syringing greens may save the life of a green. During extreme hot weather, or even dry weather, the grass plant loses water in its blades faster than it can replace the water from the soil through its root system. The plant becomes very weak, wilts, and dies. This can happen in a matter of minutes. A watering of three to five minutes during mid-day can prevent this from happening.

Before the pros complain there are several things they should remember. First of all they are a guest at the host club. I'm sure the members don't want to hear their course criticized. Even if the pros have to bite their tongues once in awhile. The pros criticism reflects on the club and the people who work there. The conditions at the clubs may be uncontrollable for reasons mentioned or even other factors not mentioned. Without the clubs being the pros host, where would they play their tournaments?

Everybody plays the same golf course! The complaints of high fairways at Pleasant Valley Country Club were truly unfair. The course record was broken the first day, and the tournament record for 72 holes was also broken. The pros have been playing this course for 9 or 10 years and playing it better all the time. Pin placements, again, everybody plays the same course! One pro who complained of poor pin placements at a recent tournament wound up winning the tournament. They couldn't have been too bad! As far as syringing greens, I would hope that the pros would like to return the golf course to their hosts in as good a condition as they found it. If a green needs to be watered in order for that green to survive, then water the green! I don't feel it will greatly upset your concentration, and again, with water on the green, everybody is playing the same course! Maybe if the greens need to be watered the pros should take a halftime break as pros do in other sports. After break, the greens would be dry and play could continue.

Professional athletes are looked up to by the weekend participant no matter what the sport. What they do and say can have an impact on the good of that sport in which they compete. In golf, the weekend golfer now uses the excuse of "flying lies" when he has a bad shot. In reality, he doesn't have the ability to hit the kind of shot he would like. I'm not putting the knock on the weekend golfer, because I'm one of them myself. But the weekend golfer doesn't know the reasons why a course isn't like the one he sees on television and it is easy for them to be critical of their own golf courses. They are unaware of what it really takes to make a good golf course. The professionals, with their travel and experience should know. Therefore, before they speak out on a course, they should make sure they have considered all aspects related to the situation.

Club managers, golf professionals and superintendents must work together in order to make golf, in Arnold Palmer's words, "The greatest game mankind has ever invented."

Larry Bunn, Newsletter Chairman

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# NEWSLETTER

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