



Golf Course Superintendents Association OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

AUGUST, 1979



Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

Super's Critical 11th Hour

The subject is tournament course preparation, otherwise known as the bewitching 11th hour for the golf course superintendent.

Alas, it is critical...especially for the superintendent who gets to become the All-American country club employee, only if he comes through with the right move at the right time. And most of the time that instant of last-minute repair or alteration constitutes a do-or-die situation for the tournament player.

Example: All of a sudden, a member comes to realize that an overhanging limb on the first tee could impede his drive. That is, it could impede it if his tee shot were hit at right angles with a full trajectory of some 200 yards. This could mean the difference between qualifying for the match play phase of the tournament with a 94 instead of a 92.

The member races to the maintenance building, some 30 minutes before tee time. He must have that limb removed. Surely, the superintendent will understand. Besides...his partner is "a helluva slicer."

What does the super do? Bow to this excessive demand? Call for an emergency meeting of the green committee? Or tell the member that if anyone in the field hits that limb, he'll not only snip the lazy branch, he'll fell the whole tree?

In other words, where does the superintendent draw the line in his endeavor to give the golfing member the best possible tournament-playing conditions?

Course preparation at tournament time, especially those member-guest types where exaggerated home club pride turns some of the demands on the superintendent into absurdity, has turned into a circus in certain cases.

"I'm always amazed at the fact that I'm roused from more important work only a few hours before the start of play by tournament committee member who discovers that our out of bound stakes are out of whack," reports one harassed member of the profession. "Wouldn't you think that members playing the course during the regular season would be aware of such discrepancies? Sometimes I wonder if the rules of golf apply only when there's a tournament to be played. As a matter of fact, I'd be interested to learn how many of our members carry a rules book in their golf bag?"

Obviously, the cut of the green can pour a slow burn onto the disposition and makeup of the super. Invariably, the height of the putting surface never is a source of complete satisfaction for the entire field.

"Some like the greens like pool tables," the super laments. "Others would prefer to have them putt true with the aid of a sledge-hammer. There are seldom two like thoughts on the matter. And it's not uncommon for an influential member to persuade the green committee into having me change the height of my cut just before play begins. It's baffling. Why do they have tournament committees, anyway?"

Fortunately, most club golfers have come to accept the latest in improved course design - the sculptured fairway. This change in the shape of things has improved the aesthetic beauty of the course while bringing the game back to the level of placing premium on accuracy rather than distance.

"But we still have a few members who think everything that grows on the course should be cut down to where they have a perfect lie," the super scoffs. "I'm talking about drives that stray yards off line and into spots where the golfer should be penalized. I've had experiences when I would have to shave the rough down to carpet texture in the middle of a tournament. You never know who's going to grab one of those deep lies. However, I've learned to live with such idiotic demands."

All too often the pains and plans of the superintendent are blown sky-high because of these last-minute decisions to make changes. "We meet several weeks before the tournament and lay everything out," the super moans. "And I set my work schedule according to those specifications. Then, a couple of hours before the bell rings, so does my head with some silly request."

Tournament course preparation, then, can be a trying time for the golf course superintendent. It is a close kin to those other mental blows that cause the super to grow gray too soon and get ulcers before their appointed arrival. It's rugged...real rugged.

Gerry Finn

NEXT MEETING

August 14, 1979

Marlboro C.C.

Host Supt. Glen Ackley

Directors meeting 10:00 A.M.

Regular meeting 11:00 A.M.

Buffet Lunch 11:45 A.M.

Golf - After lunch

**Please call club for reservations by
August 10 - 485-1660**

**Directions: Club is located on Route 20 just
east of the city of Marlboro.**

"National" Not All That Bad

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America came under the siege of a flak attack by so-called "professionals" in a recent trade publication. So, this makes the time ripe for rebuttal.

Funny thing, if there were constructive criticism of the "national" in the printed round-table discussion, it was strangely hidden. All that was translatable was the same all sing-song tale implying that the GCSA's direction is out of whack - whatever that means.

One quote was most interesting albeit confusing: "I think in the presidency what we need is someone who has the intestinal fortitude to grab this organization by the boot straps and shake it up and put it on its feet. That is the key. And when we get that person with intestinal fortitude, that's the time this organization is going to turn around."

From where?...is the next logical question.

The "national" offers its members virtually all the basic tools of bettering themselves. The annual turf conference is a distinct starting point. No where can there be found an assemblage of technical and personal aids in the development of the golf course superintendent as an individual and manager of his professional talents under one roof. The conference covers everything from offering GCSAA members a look at the latest in course-grooming equipment to a look at themselves in the spectrum of the trade. If conference-goers aren't up to taking advantage of this monumental opportunity, it isn't up to the "national" to proc them in such direction.

One of the claims of the discussion was that the GCSAA is not a powerful organization - not in the likeness of the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) which supposedly runs the country club out of town whenever one of its members is taken to task. Such an assumption is ludicrous in light of the fact of the ever-changing recognition status of the two country club posts.

It is becoming apparent - and documented by persons in high offices of National golf governing bodies - that the golf course superintendent has surpassed the home golf professional in matter of acceptance and recognition by country club members. It is not uncommon to learn of a recently-vacated club professional job being left unfilled in lieu of hiring someone to serve club members as a starter and supplier of basic equipment needs. There is no evidence of such a drastic country club personnel move when a superintendent takes another job or is asked to leave.

Certainly, the GSCAA must be accorded some form of credit for its part in building the esteem of the superintendent. In the last 10 years or so that esteem has reached reasonable heights in the general tone of opinion which advances the superintendent's position as the most important in comparison with the club manager and club professional.

There also was contained in the quasi-roast of the GCSAA that the organization has been remiss in the responsibility of acting as a public relations agent for the superintendent. Some mention was made of the lack of same during PGA Tour events...of the outstanding work the superintendent has done at the weekly tournament site. Somehow, there is a

contradictory note here. It has become almost automatic that television commentators go out of their way to praise the superintendent and his staff for playing conditions. Until the GCSAA interceded on the superintendent's behalf in this situation, the home pro usually took unwarranted bows for the condition of the course.

Talk during the discussion also filtered through as to certain of the round-table members making it a practice to pay their own expenses and use personal vacation time at the national conference. Surely, such action runs against the grain of said superintendents calling themselves, "professionals." So, in retrospect, such persons hardly qualify as expert observers and critics of a professional organization which long has promoted the absorption of conference expenses by the superintendent's employer.

As for the on-going educational offerings of the GCSAA, they are second to none. Sessions are arranged on a regular basis to include all phases of the superintendent's job specifications. Business seminars, along with courses in technical advancements, fill the GCSAA's calendar the year-round.

Frankly, the GCSAA does about as much for its members as it physically is able without adopting a parental image. The "national", then, is not all that bad. It has its imperfections, but so does any like organization. It deserves much better than an irresponsible slap in the face.

Gerry Finn

Super Championship results

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Gary Luccini

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Narry Sperandio

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'Intelligence' Can Work Wonders for The Superintendent

From an overview position and observation of operations of some course superintendents, it doesn't take a genius to realize that some of the professional course overseers are more responsive than others.

Their courses reflect that responsiveness.

And, really, there's no magical or mystical charm used by the men who seem to get a leg up on others in the business. Perhaps, just perhaps, the key lies in approaching their work as just that - a business.

Most businessmen who reap and enjoy success are the very ones who benefit from the input of the most incongruous source: Their Membership.

It is trite to rely on the aged notion that greenkeepers know more about their course than anyone - especially members. Often the member is viewed with some disdain for his undisciplined view of conditions and completely outlandish suggestions. The other side of the coin says that may be so in a preponderance of cases, but there is always some small number of members who do apply common sense to solution of problems. Some members are highly dedicated to improving their course and have a latent ability to evaluate options designed to improve golf courses.

In day-to-day operations the superintendent invariably knows most of the agronomy problems and has the tools and academic training to apply remedial action. Certainly that's why he is in the position in the first place, and that's the job for which he's being paid.

However, consider the course superintendent who plays the game with his members, discusses a multitude of problems which could exist at any course. It's a communication exchange which could prove invaluable in different ways, and it's the collection of such intelligence that improves performance.

First, there's no better avenue to good club relations than communication with members. It's an exercise in public relations on a small scale. It's letting the membership know that you care about their suggestions and feelings. It provides an opportunity for members to express such suggestions and feelings, and, in that way, involves them more deeply in their course. There is some responsibility on the Super to sift and screen, cull the reasonable suggestions from the pie-in-the-sky proposals.

Following such a communications program will soon be evident in the added pride members show in their course, and, additionally, the members spread the word through club conduits that "the Super really cares how we think."

The exercise begets cooperation - and all important friendly relationship with members who can influence decisions at the proper time when budgets are structured.

Old fashioned basic intelligence gathering of information? Very much so.

Even on the golf course.

Even by the course Superintendent.

(Submitted by Matt Rillovick, golf columnist for the Lynn Sunday Post through 20 years, and a member of the Golf Writer's Association of America.)



Golf Tournament

Sept. 15

Entree fee \$10:00

Proceeds to go to John Morse's widow.

Send to:
John Morse Fund
& Cape Cod Turf Managers Assoc.
Box 144
So. Yarmouth, Mass.

Shotgun At Bass River
8:00 a.m. and at 1:30 p.m.
Cookout to follow

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**Contributors to the Lawrence S. Dickinson
Scholarship Fund*

NEWSLETTER

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