

Ferncroft's Focal Point

Paul Johnson had it going in all directions last month. He was honing his course for the prestigious New England PGA championship (only two weeks away at the time), making sure everything was shaping up for a ladies' member-guest just a couple of days ahead and looking into the future to August when the LPGA sends its sharpshooters his way.

And, just as an afterthought, he remembered that he was going into the hospital for micro-surgery on a ruptured disc which had caused him more pain than he could describe.

"The doctor says he'll cut me one day, have me up the next and jogging 10 miles the third," Paul quipped. "If that's the case, I may not even miss a turn in my mowing rotation."

NEXT MEETING **Monday July 12, 1982** **Vesper Country Club** **Tyngsboro, Mass.**

Directors Meeting 10 am
Regular Meeting 10:45 am
Lunch will be available
Golf - Shotgun start (Individual Superintendent Championship)

Host- Bert Frederick

Bert has been superintendent at Vesper for the past 15 years. Prior to that he worked for Manny Francis Sr. at Vesper as assistant for six years. Bert has served on the GCSANE board as a trustee and has remained very active in the association. We all look forward to playing an excellent conditioned golf course on the 12th of July.



Directions - From Boston area. Take Rt. 128 north to Rt. 3 north to last exit (Tyngsboro, Dunstable). This will bring you to Rt 113. Take left and follow to the Tyngsboro bridge (still Rt. 113). Take right go 2 1/2 miles down, the club will be on the right.

IMPORTANT - Please have the courtesy to call Bert ahead of time so he can plan accordingly. (617) 453-1231

Johnson, of course, is the golf course superintendent at the Ferncroft Country Club in Danvers. It is only his second job in a 17-year career that has kept him in a rare, one-of-a-kind setting. Paul doesn't know what it means to fall under the direction of a green chairman.

Ferncroft is owned and managed by the Radisson Hotel chain. It lays complete control of the golf course in Johnson's lap. He makes all important decisions concerning playability, "cartability" and other testy situations.

"It's the way all golf course operations should be," he advised. "Naturally, I have to answer to a higher authority. However, in matters that fall under my responsibility, I answer to no one except myself."

Johnson has been at Ferncroft since 1970 or when the course added nine holes to give it a full 18. Before that, he was the superintendent at the White Cliffs resort in Plymouth. Again he had no green chairman to face at the end of the working day. He was his own boss there, too.

Whatever the pluses or minuses of the arrangement (how could it be negative?), Johnson's long tenure at Ferncroft proves that the setup is ideal for both parties. Ferncroft enjoys the reputation of being a top-conditioned layout, so much so that it is in great demand as a major tournament site.

"We've become the home of the New England PGA championship," Paul disclosed. "And this is the third year for the Boston Five Classic (LPGA event which runs at Ferncroft the first week in August). So, we must have something that golfers like."

Obviously, the Boston Five is Ferncroft's focal point and Johnson gears for that popular tournament.

"The LPGA people aren't all that demanding," Paul revealed. "They make suggestions, which I consider reasonable, and our relationship is a model one. Right now, our main concern is adding yardage to the layout for the tournament. We're into setting the tees and then putting a protection program around them for the five or six weeks prior to the start of play."

Johnson, who got his start in the profession working for his stepfather at the Whaling City Links (New Bedford) as a 12 year old, cutting greens, has had a rather uncomplicated career.

Captain of his football and basketball teams at Apponequet Regional High School, Paul passed on college followup of those sports by enrolling in the two-year course at Stockbridge.

"I always wanted to be a golf course superintendent," he told. "So, there wasn't any decision-making. I graduated from UMass in 1965, worked on golf construction for a year and went right to White Cliffs. Five years later they called from Ferncroft and here I am. The Radisson group is just a great outfit to work for. I enjoy it here."

Johnson, who has a 14-man work force in the summer and a crackerjack assistant in David Kahrman, does all the exterior beautification work at the Radisson Hotel.

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Flooded Out

As June's record rains fell, the Charles and Sudbury rivers rose, and nature took the liberty of creating swamps and ponds at many golf courses. Three of the hardest hit were Wayland Country Club, Sandy Burr and Nashawtuc Country Club in Concord.

The Wayland Country Club was covered by eight feet of water when the Sudbury river crested. Neil Loomis, who oversees the grounds operation said "when the river peaked two thirds of the course was under water, including 8 greens. The biggest problem was that the turf was covered by two inches of algae which smothered a lot of grass. We got clobbered by disease (pink snow mold, pythium)." The course is surrounded by the Green Meadows Refuge and with the water came muskrats, snakes, fish and thousands of fresh water snails. "We still have a lot to clean up" added Loomis. When Neil was finally able to send Fred Chaffee and crew to mow the greens, they used a row boat for transportation. Neil also stated that many people in canoes took advantage of the situation to take a lot of his flags and pins.

At Sandy Burr in Wayland the course was closed for eight days and course manager Ken Munsey called it a complete disaster. While not quite as bad as Wayland the clean up will be endless for Charlie Zeh and crew.

Nashawtuc was closed for 2½ weeks.

Course superintendent Billy Turner stated that the membership has to play the 18th hole as a par 3. "It'll be sometime before 18 will be dry enough" pointed out Turner. Assistant Peter Grigas mentioned that the trash from the Sudbury River overflow was an endless clean-up chore and that their pump house was completely submerged. "We had to pull our pumps out completely in order not to risk damage." Nashawtuc also has lost some turf that was smothered. "It seems that any spot covered with water for less than two weeks made it through okay, but anything over that has not fared well" added Grigas.

All in all, it looks as if it will be a while before operations at these clubs get back to normal.

Doug Johnson

Ferncroft *continued from page 1*

"The grounds and inside plant maintenance are my babies," he noted. "So, the job keeps me on my toes. Everything that grows receives my attention. Actually, I wouldn't have much time to spend with a green chairman, if I had one."

Ferncroft is a private course, available for the exclusive use of its members and hotel guests. There are 325 golfing members who swear by the condition of the course and the reputation it has gained for hosting major events.

Johnson, who lives in North Reading with his wife (Judy) and sons (Michael, Darren), has been a trustee of the New England Golf Course Superintendents Association and a big booster of its input in the profession.

"It's come a long way in the last 10 years," he said of the NEGCSA. "Almost, paralleling my career. We've grown stronger together. That's what the superintendent's life is all about. I'm glad I'm in it and happy to be part of Ferncroft and the Boston Five. Now, if my back only shapes up, I won't have a complaint in the world."

Gerry Finn

Pictures of Nashawtuc



Entrance to Nashawtuc C.C. Canoers taking a ride around course.



View of 7th hole from tee to green.



18th fairway

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Rain, Rain Go Away

If you've started keeping a diary concerning rainy days, especially weekends, here are a few facts you may want to mark down.

The National Weather Service reports that 12.08 inches of rain has fallen during the rainiest June in history. The past record of 9.42 inches was set in 1931 and was beaten on June 13th of this past month. Rain fell on 20 of the first 24 days of the month, with rain on 5 Sundays in a row. June's record rainfall is the third heaviest of any on record, behind 17.09 in August of 1955 and 13.38 for May 1954.

Needless to say, the whole golf industry has taken a beating. For the golf course superintendent the concerns are now and in the months ahead.

Many golf courses have not been able to mow all areas of play and this makes the problem double-edged. When mowing wet, soggy turf you risk injury by equipment or scalping. On the other hand, if you let these areas dry out the grass will be so high when you finally mow, the grass plant could go into shock causing loss of turf.

The major problem will be in the months of July and August, when we run into spells of hot weather. After receiving so much rain, the root system of our turf is a lot closer to the top than we would like. The grass will be in a "lushed up" state instead of being lean and mean going into the stress months. The turf has come to expect the water so the root systems have not had to reach down for water. When the warm weather comes, this turf will be much more susceptible to dry wilt and disease.

So unless we luck out with cooler and dryer than normal months in July and August we can all look forward to using more water and chemicals to keep the fat cat fed.

Doug Johnson, CGCS

Results of Superintendent- Greens Chairman Tournament

Even though the June weather was a hindrance with the use of golf carts being banned, Tony Caranci had the golf course in excellent condition. The winners were as follows

TROPHY WINNERS

1st net - Wayne Zoppo - K. Wheeler of Agawam Hunt
2nd net - Paul Miller - J. Fera of Tedesco
2nd net - Ed Brealey - G. DeStefano of Segreggansett
4th net - Bud Morton - J. Casanova of Braintree Municipal
4th net - Ron Kirkman - A. Phillips of Needham
4th net - Brian Cowan - W. Sampson of Eastward Ho

1st gross - Bill Carter - B. Congdon of Foxboro
2nd gross - Ken Mooridian - B. Consoletti of Hopedale

DIVOT DRIFT

The foursome of Dave Barber, Joel McKoan, Jack Cronin and Bobby Brown had quite a match at Ledge-mont. Joel (while still a chopper) rolled in a 40 ft. putt on the 17th hole to win the match which he felt this made up for last month....

....For the second year in a row State Welfare Commissioner, Tom Spirito, Greens Chairman at Gannon Municipal in Lynn bailed out at the last minute on golf chairman Steve Murphy. Mr. Spirito was reported as saying he feared if he rode in the same golf cart as Murphy, the loss of hair may be contagious.

....Finally, our thanks to Tony Caranci and Ledge-mont Country Club for hosting our June meeting.

Your Office -- A Reflection of Your Abilities

When your green chairman drops by your office for an unexpected chat, what does he see? Is your desk piled to eyebrow level with papers, broken parts and unsorted clutter? Do you have to search for 15 minutes to find the magazine article you need to show him? Does the dust on your filing cabinet excite his allergies?

Like it or not, the condition and appearance of your office reflect on your abilities as a manager. Granted, no one ever claimed that a golf course could be completely managed from behind a desk, and most superintendents' offices are not exactly accessible to the general public.

It's also true that many superintendents' offices, particularly at older clubs, are carved from buildings that originally housed everything from polo ponies to plows, and almost all are in the maintenance facility, which has a near-magical attraction for dust, dirt and grease.

However, the degree of order in your office and, by extension, your entire facility, reflects the degree of organization you bring to your work. You can say it's all right because you know where everything is, but what if you're not there? Does everything stop while someone tracks you down?

Even if you're limited on space and your office is at the bottom of the budgetary priorities list, there are some things you can do to bring order from chaos. Here are some suggestions.

A place for everything and everything in its place. This time-worn adage still has merit. Filing cabinets, baskets and blueprint organizers are excellent investments.

Develop a system. There is no best way to develop a filing system. The only important criterion is whether it works in your operation. It does, however, have to be based on some sort of logic.

Develop good organizational habits. Work at putting things away when you have finished with them. Develop a system for moving things from the top of your desk into some sort of permanent home and stick to it.

Try to work out some sort of schedule. It's right and proper that cleaning up your office should take a back seat to dealing with on-course emergencies and important maintenance procedures. That's your job. But take a moment at the end of the day or even at the end of the week to police your office area.

It's not only the impression your office leaves on others, it also matters how it makes you feel. Besides setting a good example for your employees, a clean, well-organized office can make you feel that you're in control and on top of things. And that's where you're supposed to be.

Fore-Front - GCSAA

To be voted on at Vesper - Charles Zeh of Sandy Burr, John Lensing of Norfolk, Phil DiRico of Shaker Farms, Douglas Stachura of Springfield.

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