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The Golf Course Superintendent - A Perspective

By TED HORTON, Supt. Winged Foot CC

Is there some restlessness, concern and modest dissatisfaction among the rank and file of Golf Course Superintendents in the Metropolitan New York area? Apparently so, and it is more obvious than we believed. This was illustrated by Jim McLoughlin, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Golf Association, at a recent Superintendents' meeting where he explained what he feels has set the stage for the "unrest" exhibited by Golf Course Superintendents:

1. **MONEY PRESSURE.** Clubs have had to reduce spending as a result of the present economic slow down. Mr. McLoughlin feels that this financial squeeze should be viewed as an "Opportunity to excell within boundaries being defined by the lower budgets." It was also illustrated that some discontent with salaries had been noted. However, it was pointed out that the Superintendent generally moves into a higher economic bracket earlier in life than other professions. As a result, a Superintendent often "feels that he is under an economic lid," and doesn't know where to turn next for advancement. Above all, he

cautioned, "keep confident and don't lose sight of the constructive values of your job."

2. **RESPONSIBILITIES.** Quite often a superintendent will obtain a job at age thirty where his responsibilities will not change appreciably for the rest of his life. Mr. McLoughlin felt that the "Superintendent would have to allow his maturity to cope with this situation" while on the other hand considering alternatives such as moving to a different club, offsite consulting, club management, or other competing jobs. Again, he emphasized, don't become discouraged."

3. **STATUS COMPETITION.** There is a status problem at many clubs between the Manager and the Superintendent and most individuals are not sure where they reside in the "pecking order" of their club. Mr. McLoughlin feels that the position of Golf Course Superintendent is the best defined at this time and most consistent. He indicated that the Superintendent probably fares far better in the "pecking order" than he feels he does.

4. **PROFESSIONAL IMAGE.** It is

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natural to want a better image but how should the Superintendent go about it? First, "it has to be earned, not wished for around tables." It was pointed out that the Superintendent is seeking professional recognition from a highly professional society." As a result, this makes the task more difficult and a greater challenge. Mr. McLoughlin asked that we consider the following to improve professionally:

1. develop a greater feel for public relations within our clubs and communities.

2. Become more involved at meetings by exposing ourselves at all opportunities as being anxious and willing to perform any task.

3. Dress up to par if we are to be recognized by the professionals we want recognition from.

4. Do not become complacent.

5. Play more golf it at all possible. Mr. McLoughlin noted that the Corporate World uses the game of golf to a tremendous advantage but the Superintendent generally neglects to use the game in this manner. Playing golf is a natural opportunity to communicate with the people we are working for.

5. And finally, to further compliment our job situation, try to provide education for property maintenance, high school orientation programs and the community environment.

As we all know, our profession has many advantages. Noting that his list was surely incomplete Mr. McLoughlin suggested that the Superintendents' job situation is healthy because of the following:

1. there are 30,000 golf related job opportunities,

2. the work is seasonally flexible

throughout the country,

3. it is out-of-doors,

4. the job provides access to a club environment.

5. it is challenging technically, dealing with labor, machinery and nature.

6. it provides an opportunity to display a variety of talents,

7. the job is needed, appreciated and respected,

8. it provides opportunities to learn,

9. there are national and local associations capable of providing assistance,

10. the Superintendent is most often his own boss,

11. the work can be recognized as it is in front of the people.

But - what lies ahead? What are the trends within our industry? Mr. McLoughlin noted that "from a management point of view, the golf club industry is in its very early crawling stages. It has yet to mature to walking and running stages." This, of course, is referring to the "General Manager Concept" which he felt could open a new horizon for all of us. In his opinion, the club industry will move in this direction and he stated that "there is a need for consistency in professionalism throughout all club programs which could be better given by General Managers than the Committee System."

As of yet, according to Mr. McLoughlin, "we do not have the individuals ready to fill the role of General Manager." But, all of us were urged to prepare to migrate to this role even though the Clubhouse Manager feels more inclined for the position. It

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Training Assistant is task of Club Management

Developing an assistant is one of the challenging jobs a club professional, "superintendent" or club manager can have. Good business practices learned and accepted as a trainee in management will probably be adhered to when the individual takes over a head position.

Here are several criteria in attempting to develop an assistant:

Give him the facts. See that your assistant has all the necessary facts about his responsibility. Give him a clear picture of what he is to do and how he should do it. Tell him how much responsibility and authority he is to have. One way to start is by helping him develop a description for his new job.

Tell him with whom he will be working, and personally introduce him to them. Make certain they understand they are to deal with your assistant and not with you in the future.

Smooth his path. Request employees who will work with your assistant to cooperate with him. You can smooth his path by spelling out for them the areas of responsibility you've given him. Then impress on him the importance of his earning the respect of other employees even when he has to reprimand them.

Share knowledge. Share your own knowledge with your assistant. If he is to do a good job, you must keep him informed of your plans, their progress and your reason for making each move. He should also be warned of problems that might arise. See that he learns the ins-and-outs of working with the other people working for you.

Failing to give your assistant such background information handicaps him. By keeping him partially in the dark, he sells him and his job short in the eyes of those with whom he must work.

Add responsibility gradually. Give your assistant responsibility gradually. Let him get the feeling of his job. By assigning him additional responsibilities in small doses, he learns to handle new problems. Thus, he is continually absorbing additional knowledge and growing as a manager.

Hold a loose rein. Some course management personnel make the mistake of trying to keep their fingers on every move made in their operations. Their constant checking may make their understudies nervous, and slow down their development. Rather than cause an assistant to lose confidence in himself, and sometimes his

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initiative, it is better to hold a loose rein.

Give him authority. Follow the management-by-exception principle when you give your assistant responsibility for a certain task. Give him the authority for getting the job done, and encourage him to bring problems to you only if something seems wrong or out of line.

Train your assistant to give you one or more suggested solutions to the problems he brings to you. You help him develop by guiding him to make the correct decision.

How much control for you? When you delegate authority and responsibility to an assistant, you are using his ability to think, to plan, to act and to evaluate. Of course, you have to keep control. Control is important so that you can blend his progress in with the overall activities of your business.

Check regularly on assignments you give your assistant. However, as

mentioned earlier, you will want to avoid the mistake of checking each little detail.

A word of advice here. Your assistant probably will not do the job the way you would. His approach may be different from yours as his handwriting is different. It may even be better. So long as he gets the results you want, do not nag him about his methods.

Some push their assistants onto the sidelines when they think something is going wrong. This practice tends to undermine their confidence. It also lowers their status with the employees under their supervision.

Try to overcome the thought that you are indispensable

Persistence in leading a strenuous life, after passing middle age, more often than not shortens life. So, bring yourself to relaxing your grip, to transferring some of your burdens to younger shoulders.

Be your age! Take it easy!

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Dew is not Dew

By TOM MASCARO

Dew, in the popular sense, is water of condensation. Dew forms on a cold surface when the air is warm and water is present as humidity.

The "dew" we find on turfgrass areas is not water of condensation. This water is the plant sap being pumped out or "exudated" from the hydathodes. The hydathodes are relief mechanisms that transport excess water out of the plant system.

Relatively speaking, very little research has been done on this important function of turfgrass culture. In 1887, Dr. Marloth in Egypt studied the Tamarix (salt cedar) and found that it exuded salts and identified them.

Dr. J. K. Wilson, Cornell University, in 1923 found that the difference in dew on a turfgrass area was not due to soil moisture, but to the species that grew. He classified the different grasses in the following manner:

1. Bentgrasses, Bermudagrasses, and Poa Annua are prolific pumpers of exudate and rated them high.
2. The Bluegrass family (with the exception of Poa Annua) were medium pumpers of exudate.
3. Zoysiagrasses, fescuegrasses and ryegrasses were low pumpers and

produced the least amount of exudated water.

This difference in the rate of exudation explains why we can observe patches of heavy "dew" on turfgrass areas that are not pure stands.

Dr. Endo, University of California in 1969 found that spores of dollar spot fungus grew sparingly in ordinary water, but when the spores were germinated in exudated water they grew sparingly to well and caused a variable amount of infection. In other words, exudated water increased infection and disease. It induced acceleration and increase in spore germination.

Dr. G. N. Hoffer, Purdue University, in 1949 demonstrated that quickly available nitrogen was rapidly transported through the leaf tissue and into exudated water. The high salt content of the exudate caused leaf, stem and root burn.

With this background information we can begin to understand better why the United States Golf Association Green Section advocated syringing of greens many years ago. Their findings indicated that the Superintendent who

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— A Perspective Cont.

was stressed that "all phases of club management have the same edge toward the role."

This obviously raised questions from the audience. Would the General Manager concept relegate the status of the Superintendent to that of a Foreman? Would the creation of a fourth executive increase the cost of administrative salaries unreasonably or might the salaries of the present executives be decreased to accommodate the fourth? Could the committee roll be abandoned completely or would department heads find themselves caught between two bosses?

I guess these questions and many others will only be answered with the passage of time. At present, it is important to prepare ourselves as best we can to accept new responsibilities as they are presented. Our profession will continuously upgrade itself through education and experience.

Finally - and perhaps most important of all - all phases of club management must strive to cooperate to provide the best possible environment for our club members.

Reprinted from Tee to Green (MGCSA) Vol. VI, No. 2, March, 1976.

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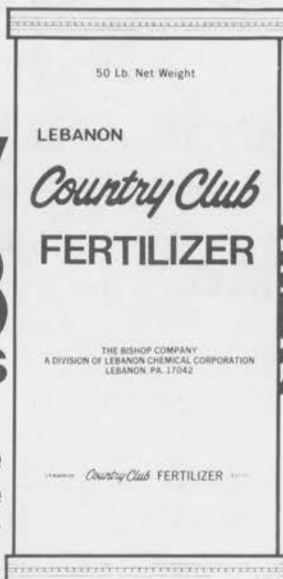
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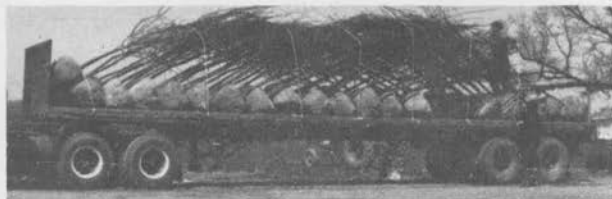
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These combinations of factors can and do have a profound effect upon the survival of turfgrasses under certain conditions. Until more research is conducted to supply more information, the wise turf manager will:

1. Practice early morning syringing to dilute exudated water.
2. Use sufficient water to wash the exudate into the soil. Aerify to insure water intake.
3. Use slowly available plant foods to minimize the salt concentration in the exudate. If quickly available plant foods are used, split the feeding into light amounts on a frequent basis.
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vertical cutting, light top dressing, dragging, brushing, all help to keep excess thatch under control.

5. PH is a factor that can be related to exudated water. The lower the susceptible turfgrasses are to disease attack. Dusting (during periods of stress) with 5 to 10 lbs. hydrated lime per 1,000 sq. ft. when grass is dry, or applying Dolomitic limestone 10 to 10 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. will change to PH in the thatch layer, which can become very acid.

I hope that this discussion "Dew is Not Dew" has given you a better understanding of this rather unrecognized subject.

Some will continue to call it "Dew", others will call it "Exudated Water." Another common name is "Guttated Water" or "Guttation Water." Poets will eternally call it "Fairy Rain". By whatever name we call this liquid that is exuded from the Hydathodes of the grass leaf, we must always remember that this is a normal function. The turfgrass manager that recognizes this basic principle and adapts his management practices to it wisely, is the one who will produce superior putting surfaces for better golf.

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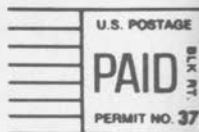
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