

around for many years. Many attachments are available now and more attachments will be coming soon so that the main unit can be used for work at other places on the course.

WHAT'S NEW AND FOR THE FUTURE AROUND THE GOLF COURSE

Many old tractors and mowers have had their day, and several new products will become available during the next few years. One that soon will be introduced will be equipped with pressure tanks to inject a gas three to seven inches below the surface for nematode control. Who knows where this development can lead? Some of the chemicals now restricted from being sprayed may be acceptable if laid in below the surface. It may also lead to new methods of getting soil amendments into the top five inches of the soil. Self-contained 9-gang tractor/mower combinations will become more popular again with the idea of reducing costs. Several efforts will be offered to mechanize sand trap work by using riding sand trap rakes. New styles of seeders as well as new methods of seeding will become popular in the market this

year. And there will be many new products in the next few years to further mechanize golf course maintenance.

SUMMARY

If we really analyze it, with the exception of a few items, the major changes in golf course maintenance equipment have come from the concept of "push to power" and "walk to ride." True necessity will cause more riding equipment to come to the fore regardless of what has been done in the last 10-15 years. The future developments also seem to be headed for the replacement of mechanical drives to hydraulic methods as well as simplified overall design for less mechanical maintenance of a product. We forecast a greater need for education in the field and we as manufacturers will have to accept responsibility for providing it.

So for the future, a host of mechanical products will be forthcoming to help golf course operators reduce effort, time and costs. The requests operators have made toward these new developments in mechanization involve products aimed at minimum maintenance with maximum benefits for better turf.

Overcoming the Charlie Brown Syndrome

By **Don S. Marshall**, General Manager, Montclair Golf Club, Montclair, New Jersey

It is not quite clear to me with a title such as this whether I have been selected for the program as a successful failure, or a failure at success. From the position on the program, the odds seem to be stacked, but then again wouldn't that be the way with Charlie Brown? My factual Charlie Brown experience is limited to the local Newark paper, which conveniently went on strike during the 90 days this short talk was being formulated. In fact, by my recollection they struck just about exactly the day Holman Griffin called, and they haven't gone back since.

Closer to life, when Holman did call in regard to this topic, I quite naturally closed the conversation with the normal rhetorical, "How's your family?" The answer I received just had to be straight from the comic strip. "Well," said Holman, "everything's just fine, but my father-in-law just had an attack, and my mother-in-law broke her arm the next day, so my wife is in Texas. Of course you know I was just transferred to Charlottesville, Virginia, so

I'm up here; my youngest is in Hillsboro, Texas, and the cat is in Atlanta, Georgia; but actually we're very happy, the furniture's in the moving van!" Now I ask you: who should be giving this talk?

There is probably no group of people more highly subject to a sense of consistent and heart rending failure as golf course superintendents. If it isn't the weather, it's the members; if not the members, the help; and if not the help, it's the indoctrinated wife who doesn't understand why you can't visit mother-in-law over the long 4th of July weekend.

A lot of this feeling is true. Nature does seem to have a way of continually attempting to return your golf course to the primeval forest, and if you stop to think of it, that's the bulk of your problem—you are in charge of an un-natural arrangement. The September issue of *Scientific American* indicates that it will take her just about nine years from the time you toss it in to erase your recognizable presence.

Crabgrass and *Poa annua* are naturals evolved

for excellent purposes; yet we and our Green Committees have decided we don't like them. So, when we fail slightly in their removal, we have really failed to divert some two million years of natural evolution. When you take this perspective, it may not appear that any success is possible. On the other hand, perhaps even 70 per cent control is beyond belief, with no special thanks to the federal government on the long time it took for the 70 per cent product to achieve a legal label.

Members are another source of potential stone wall banging. There are the conservatives and the expansionists; the social ins and the outs. I have often thought that the only real solution is to make every superintendent a full-fledged dues-paying member: thus, capable, or at least in a position, to rise and fall with the economic and social tide as must be expected of an honest-to-gosh "first class" citizen.

Admittedly there are those who on occasion might attempt to bluff the membership with a highly technical answer regarding the reason for a problem. It's a good ploy—tackle someone out of his area of technical knowledge and he's dead. However, often we tend to justify our failings with an exaggerated technical explanation that, while true, is phony. "The members were complaining about dandelions on the fairways to the extent that we had to use 4-diphenyl-phenoxy-etc-etc. herbicide against our better judgement, and it killed everything."

What we don't say is that if we truly had thought we couldn't pull it off, we wouldn't have done it, and if only the sprayman hadn't thought the x-and-a-half formulation we mixed for him meant overlap half a width every pass! No one told him to, but we build the team spirit, so to him the only good weed was a dead weed.

This leads us to the subject of panic. I doubt there is a superintendent who hasn't had that hard knot feeling in his stomach caused by a careless, off-handed comment of his Chairman, or a Board member, that really cut to the core.

The other cause of the same feeling is a judgment gamble. Your club is to be the site of a big state tournament so you raised the fertilizer rate slightly just to provide "a little color." Trouble is there was a stone jammed in the proportioner (or the weather changed drastically), and there's tip-burn on every green. Members just don't understand tip-burn or proportioners. The informal locker room talk indicates you are one step above a moron, and you leave work ready to lose the dinner you haven't even had yet, and it's 8 p.m. In this case no one will even listen to your explanation—and, in fact, they let you believe it never happened, at least on the surface.

It's right after this type of situation that you spot a blind classified ad in *Golfdom* for a

"challenge in North Jersey," and begin to wonder if it's your job. Or the local drummer comes in and says he's heard "a couple of boys are in trouble," but he can't give you any names.

So let's face it, the job of superintendent is the worst imaginable. It could be great, but probably only if grass were our prime concern. It is unfortunate that our failures, in general, are measured only against our previous successes. But so be it: success is possible, but in our situation, perhaps not permanent. It is also unfortunate that our view of success does not necessarily coincide with the feelings of our members. A new trap, beautifully placed and executed, is a work of art to us, but perhaps one more leg on the pink slip to a loud group of members. It is here that public relations comes into play—an area in which we as a group are all weak.

There are many of our failures that can, fortunately, or unfortunately, be foreseen. The dissemination of this information can do us no harm. Because we know disaster will happen, it might just help us to clue our employers in. If hot weather is going to cause a flush of silver crabgrass that we have failed to control due to lack of money, or acceptable methods, let's at least say so before it happens. Preventive maintenance starts with the superintendent's mind and mouth in all cases when failure is foreseeable. And, in fact, is a foreseeable failure a true failure? In our business predicting failure is most likely what we do best.

Opening the course on a floating day in March, or all winter, will cause a failure in July only if you did not go on record in writing as to the results that will naturally derive from this action when the final decision was taken out of your hands.

In many instances preventive maintenance takes a back seat to preventive problems and, again, most golf course problems are solved by more talk than action.

On golf courses in general, I find it is extremely rare that there is a saleable emergency. Therefore, my basic working rule is, "whatever is urgently needed requires five years lead time." While this condition may not apply in all situations, if we do not properly communicate our problems, we will eventually end up the sole owner of same. Conversely, most situations should never reach the panic stage if the superintendent has properly recognized future conditions that will certainly arise and begun a planned program leading to a cure. Constant complaining about the old shop isn't going to accomplish a thing unless some facts and figures on costs and loss of efficiency are reasonably presented. The main thing is not only to present the facts, but to do it regularly

with calm reason, and to establish priorities. No one is going to look upon you with any great sympathy the day you're wearing the roof of the old barn around your ears and you don't even have a plan for a new one. There is a big difference between registering a complaint and making a complaint register. The latter is often distinctly helped by a lack of the former. In the same vein, the presentation of a proposed plan for future action may be the presentation of a complaint in your view, but will be seen as constructive original thought on the part of your employers.

It is now obvious we are talking about the man, the superintendent, and how he conducts himself. But wait a minute: Are we both talking on the same wave length? Probably not, I can't understand at least half of Charlie Brown either.

Superintendents in the future will be certified as to proven minimum knowledge of the methods of the industry. Not long after will come a certified superintendent failure. Unfortunately, he will become our original Charlie Brown. He will have been judged not by his peers in the business, but by his employer; a truly acceptable and reasonable method.

If the knowledge and/or innate ability of every practicing superintendent were plotted on a graph, there is very little doubt that on the basis of 1—100 their profile would create some form of bell curve. That is to say, the majority of the men rated would fall somewhere in the middle of the scale, with about an equal number at the top and an equal number at the bottom trickling off to almost nothing at both the high and the low end. If we add some variables, we could do what statisticians call skew the curve either way—if knowledge of equipment operation were heavily weighted in the survey, the curve created would be skewed in the upward direction, or the 100 end of the curve. If complete knowledge of the insurance laws applying to golf course operation were used as a strong criterion, the curve would undoubtedly drop off to the low end. By now I can see several good friends adjusting their positions wondering just where I think I'm going. Well, let's look a little further.

Other than the establishment of par, I don't believe anyone has ever rated golf courses on any other meaningful scale, with the possible exception of budgets. In fact there are strong doubts that a scale could be established if such variables as budgets, geographical area, and the number of golf rounds, were added to the survey. However, let's stick to golf, our ultimate consideration. If on a given day, or month, all courses in the country could be rated by knowledgeable golf people on a scale of what is most important to the game, we

would most assuredly come up with another nearly normal curve.

The question here is, "would our rating of quality courses match the curve of quality superintendents we have previously determined?" Would our highest-rated superintendents be serving our highest-quality courses? If our highest-rated superintendents are also, as they should be, our "certified" superintendents, then the only way to have a quality course is to hire a certified superintendent. It is here that I think our distribution will not correlate. Attempting to simplify: I would be willing to venture that some of the most talented men we have are operating courses that are considered somewhat below modern standards, yet it is only by virtue of the above average talents of these men that these courses can even be played. Let's not be so sweeping as to say that anyone can produce a quality product with a fat budget, good equipment, watering system, and an acceptable soil and terrain. Let us say that these conditions seem to have become the name of the superintendent's game. It is easy to understand why all or any of the aforementioned make the job a lot easier. Do I dare state that these easy jobs call for superintendents, while the more difficult jobs call for managers—managers in the true sense of the word—people who control an operation based on outside variables, not those who oversee the carrying out of a predestined conclusion. Charlie Brown can supervise, but he goes down the drain every time he attempts to manage.

Now that a number are bristling and mumbling "hypocrite" under their breath; just let me state that golf course and golf club management, in my opinion, are not separable. The enterprise is not large enough economically to support two true managers, and the working climate, as many know, will not. Can it be hoped that "certified" will come to mean a knowledgeable golf club operation manager? He need not cover all technical aspects of any one field; his entire responsibility is to spot weakness in the operation and correct it as soon as possible to the best of the limits of his club's overall policies. Gentlemen, we have true managers in our ranks. It is fortunate that clubs are showing a distinct tendency toward recognizing them; it is just as fortunate that some of them are not the people you think they are. The present operating economy of golf clubs in this country cannot allow them to be kept in limbo much longer.

As a group, the golf course superintendents are probably some of the unusually talented people employed by any industry. There is virtually no corporation, or even small business, that would lump so many job specifications on

one man, ranging from scientific to financial, to personnel, to engineering, to public relations, and, finally, to knowledge of golf and overall club operations. It is true that no one can expect a given individual to be fully knowledgeable in all of these areas, any more than a club house manager can be the best of chef, accountant, and public relations man. Knowledge is one thing, but ability to think is another, and anyone knows a golf course superintendent has to think.

Anyone who can think intelligently can manage, and it's about time we began to look upon management, not as a governing body, but as a goal to be reached, and the sooner the better for both ourselves and the clubs we serve.

There are ways that we can guarantee ourselves that we shall forever be Charlie Browns.

We can take each day as it comes. Why plan ahead, if you're not even sure who's going to show for work in the morning.

We can make up an excellent defense after our "supervision" fails. A green chairman once told me, "Don't scream 'til you're hurt." I didn't for a while until I remembered what people do when they fall off tall buildings.

We can accept our established positions and not fill a management void in other areas of the club operation. If a 3-inch water line in the club house bursts, what business is it of yours, even though that's small stuff to you and your men.

We can treat communications as something for television and the club manager—as long as you know what you are doing, why should they?

We can continue to be the only people in the world to own a one-sided coin—there ain't no way someone else could be right when I made a decision the other way—like closing the course.

Friends, let Charlie supervise. Perhaps that's the heart of our schizoid problem anyway. We are true managers playing a role that we have been cast in by others—called superintendents.

The Good and Not so Good of Triplex Putting Green Mowers

By **William H. Bengeyfield**, Western Director,
USGA Green Section

The modern triplex putting green mower has produced a not so minor revolution in putting green care. As in all revolutions, the determination of whether it is good or bad rests largely with who you are and how you are affected by it.

Triplex mowers, although not new, are still in their infancy, and today's models will be tomorrow's curiosities. But for the moment, many hold doubts as to their present value if judged strictly by the results they produce. The problems of grain, wear and compaction are very real, especially if they are continually used on bentgrass greens in all kinds of weather. On the other hand, if you are the fellow paying the labor bill (which comprises 70 per cent or more of the budget), the triplex green mower must be considered a godsend!

Some years ago, agricultural economists at Purdue University undertook a study to determine how much a farmer could afford to invest in equipment to save his labor time. If labor is

worth \$2 an hour and if golf course chores are similar to farm chores, the tabulation would look something like this:

Machine Saves	Farmer Can Afford
60 minutes per day	\$4,500.00
50 minutes per day	3,800.00
40 minutes per day	3,000.00
30 minutes per day	2,200.00
20 minutes per day	1,400.00
10 minutes per day	600.00

No wonder triplex putting green units have literally saved the day for many municipal as well as private golf courses. They are here to stay and the equipment is going to get better with time.

As increased labor costs have forced the use of more sophisticated machinery, the trend is undeniably toward more versatile equipment; i.e., being able to do more than one job. Triplex mowers already have interchangeable units for vertical mowing, tee mowing, etc. Fairway sweepers now have dethatching devices, etc. I'm