



Tim Sedgley, a senior at Colorado State U., gets a pointer from Dave Drocker, assistant superintendent at Cherry Hills.

Tomorrow's

by LARRY EGGLESTON, Superintendent, Cherry Hills Country Club, Colorado

Nearly every golf course superintendent in the business for any length of time has had the opportunity to hire and help turfgrass students of today. It is important for us to take a direct interest in these students, for they will be the golf course superintendents of tomorrow. Students can be a valuable asset on any maintenance crew because they have an intense interest in the profession and often have previous experience in golf or related fields. They can adapt quickly and become valuable, efficient employees. Practical experience is absolutely essential in today's world. With careful planning, we can help the student gain an experience every bit as valuable as his formal education. It has been said that a college degree may help one secure employment, but only experience will help him keep it.

We presently have many universities offering four-year degrees and many more offering two-year diplomas in turfgrass management. Whether a student's goal is a two- or four-year program, he should strive for a minimum of three seasons of practical, on-the-job experience. With a degree and at least three well

planned seasons of experience, a student should have a good, solid background for entering his chosen profession. Depending on enthusiasm and experience, he might feasibly enter the profession anywhere from a greenkeeper right up to a golf course superintendent spot. The thought and care we give in helping train the student will influence how close to the top he starts.

Obviously, if a student only mows fairways for three months, he will have learned very little. Serious thought, therefore, should be given to how the student will learn the most from his work and at the same time, be of the most value to the permanent staff and its efficient operation. Clearly, no one can delineate exact procedures applicable to every turfgrass student. Nevertheless, following are some general guidelines that may stimulate your thoughts for training the student while maintaining him as a productive worker.

ROOKIES—To avoid hard feelings among members of the regular maintenance staff, the student must be made to work his way up like everyone else. The student should understand



Brad Klein, a junior at the University of Minnesota, here checks the effects of an algacide treatment with Larry Eggleston.

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clearly in the beginning that he is expected to carry more than his share of the load. You should rightfully expect him to have a deeper interest and dedication. Don't forget however, as with all employees, some will progress much faster due to their past experience and natural abilities. Try to strengthen his weak areas, but if he shows little or no initiative or desire to work, speak frankly with him. Tell him that he has apparently chosen the wrong profession and unless he has a complete change in attitude he will never make it. You'll be doing him a favor by getting him out of the business before he gets into it!

The rookie needs to learn the importance of the small but important tasks required in everyday maintenance. Rotary mowing, bunker raking, hand trimming, hand digging, greens mowing and watering are only a few of the chores he must master. If hard work bothers him, you will both find out soon and a discussion of his future would be appropriate.

It's important for all employees to know why they are performing each task, but with the student it's even more important. Make yourself clearly understood. If he is attentive, everything you say to him will be of value in his

future work. As with all employees, commend him for work well done and criticize where it's constructive. Students hoping to become superintendents should learn early to accept criticism; they might well be in for a lifetime of it.

By the end of the first season, the student should know how to operate most of the smaller machines and should have developed an awareness of the amount of work that goes into maintaining a golf course. He should have developed a good working relationship with the assistant superintendent so that he can better learn the requirements of that position. Hopefully, the student will have an interest in golf. He should be encouraged to play golf at least occasionally after work. With growing general interest from his summer's experience, he should be encouraged to work hard at school and return the following year to further his on-the-job training.

SECOND YEAR—Having worked a full season, either at your golf course or another, and having a year or two of study under his belt, the turf student should now be ready to accept more responsibility. Depending on his skills, he should learn to operate every machine on the

course this summer. When extra work is necessary around tournament time, or when illness strikes a key employee, allow the student to fill in and watch him carefully. Changing cups on the weekends, spot watering and syringing, aerating and top-dressing, and assisting your key men with the fertilizing and spraying are typical tasks for the second-year man. Again, where possible, allow him to gain needed experience in his weaker areas. For instance, if he is not particularly mechanically inclined, maybe he could assist the mechanic with fairly simple, routine tasks when the work load piles up. He will thereby improve his skills in that area.

By the end of the second year, the turfgrass student should have a good working knowledge of every job on the course. You should be leaning heavily on him now for extra work as needed; as an occasional weekend foreman late in the season and, depending on your climate, he should spend a portion of the summer as an irrigator or waterman. Having learned to perform many tasks on the course during his second summer, he should be most valuable to you next season.

THIRD YEAR—The third year should find the turfgrass student prepared to handle any task on the golf course. He should now be working very closely with the assistant superintendent in setting up the course for play, in supervising small crews, and applying fertilizers and chemicals. After thorough consultation on a project, he should be allowed to make decisions and to follow the project through to

completion. It might be well for him to be taking notes for his own good, concerning the responses of fertilizers and chemicals, the results of renovating procedures, climatic conditions, etc. This will help impress upon him the importance of good record keeping as a superintendent. If possible, involve him with other members of the club staff as well as club members themselves. Where feasible, encourage him to undertake off-the-course tasks. By now he should definitely be a key member of your staff.

He should be encouraged to attend local superintendents meetings, seminars, equipment shows, field days, etc. Help keep his mind constantly alert by quizzing him as to how he would handle different situations. Let him estimate fertilizer requirements, pesticide needs, etc., but at the same time impress on him that growing grass is often the easy part; handling the people is often where the problems lie.

By the end of the third season, the turfgrass student has had an opportunity to dig even deeper into the inner workings of your operation. After three seasons, what are his accomplishments? Hopefully, you will have provided him with valuable, useful knowledge and experience that his schooling cannot provide. Hopefully, you have utilized the services of an employee who is interested in his work and dedicated to it. Hopefully, he has been an asset to the maintenance staff. Hopefully, you have encouraged today's turfgrass student to think, to work hard and to enjoy his work as tomorrow's golf course superintendent.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Eggleston added three summers' experience under Ted Rupel at Cherry Hills C.C., to his record while obtaining his B.S. from Colorado State University. This experience helped him secure the assistant superintendent spot at the 36-hole Broadmoor resort complex in Colorado Springs in 1964. After two years as assistant and four as superintendent (including the 1967 U.S. Amateur Championship), he moved back to his training grounds, Cherry Hills C.C., where he just completed his fifth season as superintendent.

