

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS: THE MISSING LINK!

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GOLF is an emotional game! When players do well, they feel good and all is right with the world. When they do poorly, they become frustrated and want to take their frustration out on someone else. Unfortunately, that someone often is the golf course superintendent. Some people seem to believe that poor play can't possibly be related to inferior equipment (clubs, balls, etc.), the skill level of the players, or weather conditions. Therefore, poor scores must be caused by the condition of the golf course. It's not their game; it's the condition of the golf course!

All golfers have good days and bad. Weather conditions will affect the condition of a golf course and a player's ability to score. Golf can be an emotional game, but that does not mean that golf course maintenance should be based on emotions. Quite the opposite, it points to the need for stability and consistency in course conditioning.

Golf course superintendents are expected to provide an attractive course that is consistent, fair, and challenging to play, while

being reasonably economical to maintain. This is a tall order that requires an experienced, well-trained professional. Expectations and working parameters should be carefully thought through by course officials and by the superintendent. Once determined, a mutually beneficial written employment contract should be executed.

A written contract provides the superintendent with the guidelines needed to do the job. Written agreements help bridge the communication gap that often occurs with a change in course officials. A contract also protects the superintendent from the occasional emotional outburst that is inevitable when people play an emotional game. An employment contract gives course officials some assurance about how the golf course will be conditioned. In addition, the contract establishes guidelines for an orderly and equitable change in superintendents, should a change occur.

If done correctly, a written contract can help establish a solid and unemotional working relationship. In the long run, a

contract may even help a course save money by maintaining consistency in expectations and objectives. Further, golf course superintendents with employment contracts tend to stay at one course longer, and this has the potential of benefiting the entire maintenance operation.

Very few golfers walk up to a 10-foot putt and hit the ball without stooping down to look at the line on which the ball will roll. Lining up a putt allows the player to decide on a direction in which the ball must travel to go into the hole. An employment contract is like lining up a putt. You might get lucky and achieve the desired results without developing a plan, but advance planning makes success much more likely.

Is the missing link in your golf course maintenance operation the lack of a mutual understanding between course officials and the superintendent? Quit relying on luck and take the emotions out of your golf course conditioning! A written employment contract will help you take a positive step toward a successful future.