

The Best Turf Tips of 1993

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, 12 of the Green Section's agronomists reported on some of the helpful ideas and ingenious innovations they came across while visiting golf course superintendents in every part of the country during 1992. The Turf Tips appear throughout this issue.

Putting Your Cards on the Table

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HOW OFTEN has it happened? Days, weeks, or months are spent preparing for a major presentation to the membership. All of this hard work results in a thorough, well-prepared proposal and expectations for a quick acceptance. Then it happens. The floor is opened for questions from the audience. Some are good, honest requests for more information. Other comments are emotional and driven by various political factions. By the time the meeting is over, the concept you were trying to sell has been torn apart.

Sound familiar? This often occurs when golf courses are considering a much-needed improvement, but one that affects the players' pocketbook: a new irrigation sys-

tem. Virtually every reason imaginable can usually be heard in opposition to a new irrigation system. Quite often it simply is financial. However, a technique viewed in 1992 at Grants Pass Golf Club in Oregon may save the day if you are faced with a similar situation.

For six years the membership had been informed of the desperate need for an irrigation system, and for various reasons the requests had fallen on deaf ears. The golf course superintendent, Scott Shillington, decided to try once again. Working in close coordination with the club president, Ken Behymer, a plan was formulated to sell the membership on the worthiness of the project. After several months of meetings and in-

ternal education of the membership, a special informational meeting was arranged. Due to the size of the expected crowd, the meeting was held away from the golf club. This fulfilled two important objectives: a neutral site and no alcohol.

The next phase of the plan called for 10-minute presentations by the golf course superintendent, irrigation designer, USGA Green Section agronomist, and club president. Each speaker discussed specific areas, such as current conditions, the proposed design, why the system was necessary, and financial considerations. Rather than establishing a standard format of questions during or after the presentations, index cards were distributed. Questions were written on the index cards during the presentations, but none were verbalized. After the speakers finished, a 15-minute break allowed time for collecting cards and distributing questions to the speakers. Each speaker then read the questions *in his own tone of voice*. All emotion was removed, and just the facts were stated. When the responses to these written inquiries were completed, questions then were taken from the floor. Very few were asked, and emotion was virtually nonexistent!

Four weeks after the presentation, a new irrigation system was approved by a solid majority at a golf club comprised primarily of senior golfers. This innovative method of presenting controversial ideas to a membership has three obvious advantages. First, hosting the meeting at a neutral site removed the possibility of viewing the golf course — reality can be camouflaged by the effects of natural rainfall. Second, the elimination of the alcohol factor ensures potentially less disruption. Finally, removing emotion from the discussion allows the membership to make an informed decision based on factual data. So, the next time you are faced with a similar challenge, you may wish to put your cards on the table!

Putting audience questions on index cards and presenting them to the speakers at a club meeting helps eliminate emotion and encourage facts to reign during the discussion period.

