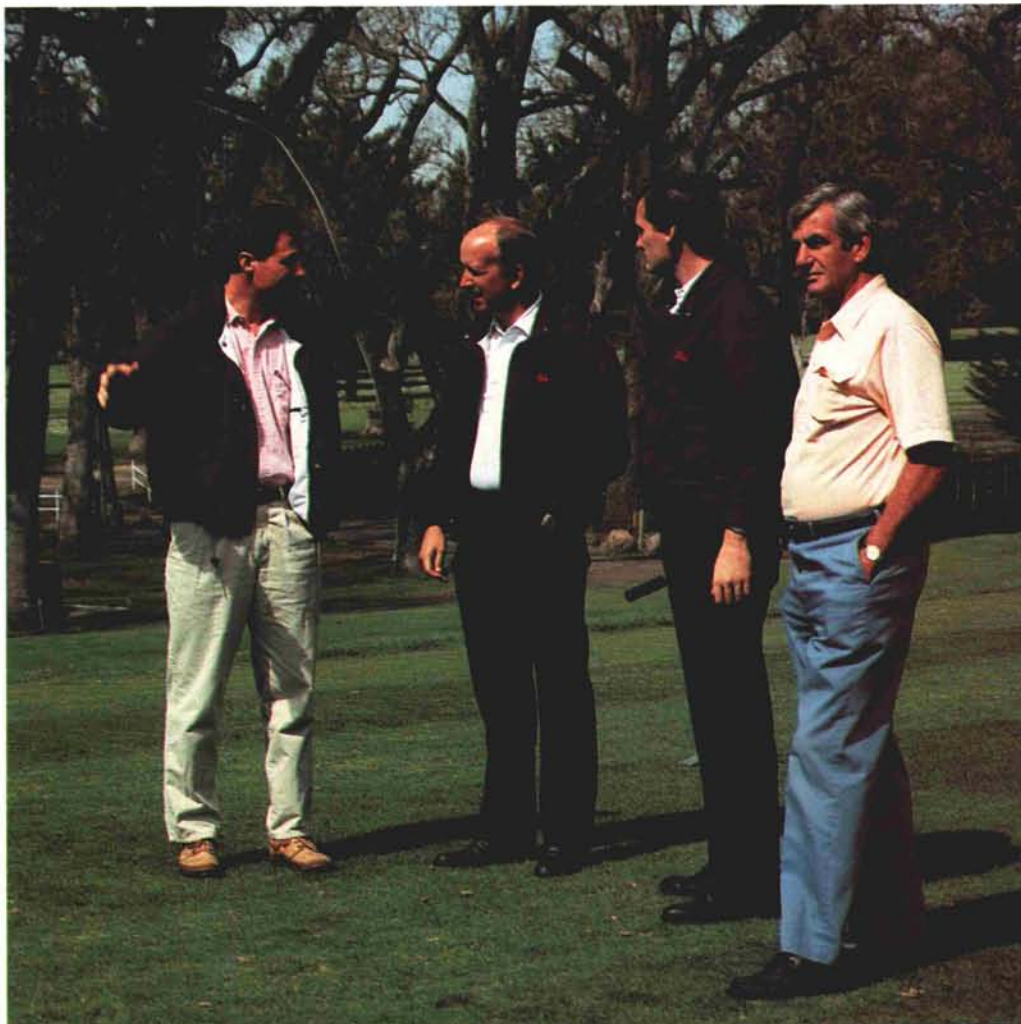


ON COURSE WITH NATURE

“EGO-SYSTEM” MANAGEMENT

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Communication and understanding are the first steps in dealing with golf course concerns.

EGOS: they're everywhere — golf courses are full of them; perhaps they are a natural part of the habitat. Everybody's got one and very few of us know how to deal with them. Most of the time we can't even deal with our own, let alone attempt to deal with someone else's.

Managing a golf course with the environment and wildlife in mind occasionally sets egos against each other. If you play the game of golf, you probably have ideas, opinions, and expectations about the game. For instance, there are a full range of opinions and expectations about the speed of the greens, the depth of the rough, the “interference” or enjoyment of wildlife inhabitants. But occasionally the frustration of that last high score or the lost golf balls in the “naturalized” habitat may expose egos that are connected to the “I'm really a pro golfer, and the only reason I hit that bad shot was somebody else's fault” ego. If a golfer takes his or her frustration out on the golf course superintendent (“The course isn't manicured

enough!”), we may see exposed the “I am a professional turfgrass manager and you really don't know anything” ego. For the good of the game, the superintendent profession, the environment, and blood pressure, we should all take a deep breath. Remember, it is only a game, but we are talking about real people who have legitimate concerns.

We all want to feel important. We all want to be recognized for our talents, efforts, concerns, hard work, or commitment. The problems usually begin, however, when one ego meets another ego. If both of the egos are determined to be the *expert*, one ego has to yield or a conflict will result.

The seed of many conflicts is a lack of communication and understanding. Golf course managers will tell you that many potential collisions of egos take place every day. These collisions may be with management, golfers, members, employees, concerned citizens, government employees, and others. They will also tell you it takes a lot

of time and energy to resolve some of those conflicts. If all of us would make an honest effort to **listen** for the needs of **others**, help them define what they're really looking for, and then help them understand what **we** are looking for, many conflicts might be avoided or more efficiently resolved. But, it also takes perseverance, a sense of perspective, and a reasonably decent sense of humor.

My Dad gave me a piece of advice once that is very appropriate. He said, “In the environmental area (and possibly in life generally), you have to be willing to do a lot of hard work and be prepared to give everyone else all the credit.” Let me tell you, it doesn't cost very much to treat people with respect and to recognize their efforts and contributions. The results of a positive attitude and well-managed “ego-system” may surprise you. You may find life more satisfying both personally and professionally, not to mention finding a little extra energy to enjoy your job, the environment, **and** the game of golf.