

Super Educators

The green committee, course officials, and golfers all need regular schooling.

BY BUD WHITE

Few superintendents have been schooled in the art of teaching.

Keeping up with the changes and updates in turfgrass management practices, turf diseases, weed control, chemical advancements, environmental regulations, OSHA regulations, and staff and budget management, to name only a few, has even the most organized superintendents on their toes. However, the importance of golfer education by the superintendent is greater than ever. The most successful golf course operations are those that keep a green committee, board of directors, and course officials fully aware of essential maintenance programs.

Every golf course has at least one problem green, tee, or fairway. Do your course officials understand why these areas are a problem? Green Section agronomists frequently see examples of inadequate course official and member education by superintendents. This equates to less efficient maintenance operations, golfer/staff friction, and/or resistance to key programs, typically with aeration seen as the leading culprit.

Superintendents need to make a strong self-evaluation of their membership education efforts. It is essential that the board of directors, green committee, general manager, and golf professional have a general knowledge of maintenance programs, their function, timing, and frequency. Do your course officials understand about environmental concerns, needs in the maintenance area, or the necessity of a capital equipment replacement line item in your budget? This is especially important when committees need to make informed budget decisions, and it gives them ownership in these decisions.

Communication with golfers about course operations is a vital responsibility of the green committee and other course officials. Are they equipped to help you? Consistent updates on course operations are especially important for the pro shop staff. If they do not support your operations in communicating with the golfers, then you've lost an important opportunity.

The maintenance facility is an area of the course virtually unknown to golfers and often unknown to some of the management staff. They neither comprehend the complexity of this facility nor realize how important it is. Too many golfers know it as "The Barn" — an inadequate description for a facility that houses more than a half-million dollars' worth of equipment and from where the golf course is managed.

Are the course officials aware of the need for a state-of-the-art fuel station, wash pad, or chemical/fertilizer storage area? Does expensive equipment have to be stored outside? Are the crew restroom, lunchroom, and locker facilities adequate? In short, do your committees and course officials know the strengths and shortcomings of the maintenance facility? One way to overcome this problem is to have one green committee meeting in the maintenance facility each year. Ideally, the board of directors, green committee, general manager, and golf professional should be present so that all course management officials are aware of one of the most important capital centers of a facility.

How are your visibility and accessibility to the golfers? Saturday morning, for example, is a great time to interact with golfers around the pro shop or the first tee. Superintendents who have the greatest rapport and stability are those

who are seen by course officials and golfers and are always available.

As a golf course superintendent, do you educate or just inform? Do you take proactive and creative approaches in managing the course, or do you provide only minimal input at green committee meetings and offer only a last-minute column for the newsletter? One great method of communication is a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation at a green committee's monthly meeting to update and discuss current or anticipated issues. PowerPoint is an easy-to-use tool that conveys a powerful, professional impression. Use PowerPoint for a 30- to 45-minute educational session to inform and update newly elected board members and committee members. The presentation should be updated regularly so that it will be of interest to existing committee members as well. If you have never used PowerPoint, GCSAA offers an online class that trains you in using this valuable tool. Teaching course officials how to use the USGA Web site for agronomic information and the GCSAA Web site for other educational opportunities can be an effective resource for them as well.

Teaching and informing course officials and golfers is an area of superintendent responsibility that requires honest self-evaluation and idea-gleaning from fellow superintendents regarding their methods of education. Superintendents should set the example for competent board, committee, and course official education on maintenance operations and the special needs of their golf course.

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