

Maturity...That's What It Takes!

By Dave Doherty

The one thing that I've found constant with every successful golf course, athletic field, racetrack, or tennis court operation I've worked with over the last 20 plus years is maturity at the management level. And it doesn't matter whether it's an active owner, board president, general manager, green chairman, director of golf, golf course superintendent, or grounds keeper.

I've come across many definitions of the word 'maturity', however this definition has really had an impact on me: *Factor of professional maturity providing an open mind.*

I now understand this as leadership with an *open mind* and to that I add my own words to this definition: the state of *calmness*. In other words, the most successful operations I've worked with all have *calmness and an open mind* aura (a distinctive but intangible quality surrounding a person or thing) that filters down from the top managers to those in other management positions and hourly workers that make up their entire work force.

It doesn't take being an older person to acquire this maturity of calmness and an open mind. During a recent trip to Toronto, Ontario, Canada I visited a number of **of** courses I've worked **with** over the last few years. All have good leadership, leaders with a calmness and open mindedness about them that made my visits very enjoyable. However one course stands out in a very positive way.

This course last year was in a state of flex. Club management kind of knew what needed to be done, but wasn't sure just how to get there. This very prestigious club took a gamble and hired a **young** superintendent who had that aura about him of calmness, confidence, and open mindedness...**maturity**.

In the year since they've made a number of improvements with the quality of turf. But the morale of the staff with whom I've visited really got me excited.

They're excited about their work and are looking forward to the 2013 results. This young superintendent has been able to first find out what he was dealing with, *based on science*, and the physical, chemical and biological properties of his turf.

Upon understanding what he was dealing with he was able to sell his new programs to his staff, because they have **now** been able to understand why they were being asked to do certain chores they had not done before.

During a tour of the course the assistant superintendent took me to the 18th green where they had installed four-way drains with slide valves in the green's low run off areas and clean outs on the ridges of each green. A lot of work to say the least.

The impact that this new four-way slide valve system will have on the quality of turf is beyond words. Not only will they be able to see the water draining after a rain, they will be able to measure the discharge water for chemicals. It will allow them to flush their greens more effectively and use less water in doing so.

This four-way system will also allow for more oxygen to be available to the roots. When oxygen is in short supply, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulphide and methane can become more prevalent.

Under the leadership of this new young superintendent this prestigious golf club will soon be back to the conditions that the members expect. Why the turn around? **MATURITY!**

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