

FROM THE PUBLISHER



There's an old saying, 'It's lonely at the top.' Most of you know that feeling only too well. You don't have to be chairman of the board of a major corporation to feel the pressure. Grounds managers and golf course superintendents feel the pressure all the time, but especially when your facility is having a major television event. It is your responsibility to have the fields, greens and fairways in top condition. If it's not right, the fault is yours. Sure you instructed your crew to do it, but if someone screwed up, as the head of the department, you have to shoulder the burden.

In most corporations, if there is a screw-up, at least it is kept within the walls of the corporation's offices, but in your situation, not only does your management know about it, it seems the whole world does as well.

but with the advent of television, it seems the whole world is played at your situation, not only does your management know about it, it seems the whole world does as well. When a pro golfer has to sink his putt to win the match, and a gallery of thousands are watching, the pressure really builds. At least when they win, one of the rewards is hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash prizes.

It's a funny world. An athlete can be good for 30 percent of his effort and he is considered a superstar, yet the rest of us are expected to be good 98 percent of the time. If a baseball player bats .300, he is a superstar, if a quarterback completes 60 percent of his passes he is great, if a golf pro wins a few major tournaments he is considered a superstar, yet the rest of us are expected to be good 98 percent of the time.

Just think, if you could have the field look good 30 percent of the time, and like the pressure you would have to live with. You could have the luxury of your crew making some mistakes and not be on the carpet for it. With the Super Bowl now a memory, my mind wanders back to the preparations that were made for that event. It was no different for the World Series or the Masters, etc. Knowing that the world would be viewing first hand what it takes to get a field in shape. I went to San Diego to observe all the pressure, any professional grounds manager would love to have the opportunity to prepare a field for such an event. For a moment at least, it is his moment in the spotlight.

I'm sure many professional turf managers are very capable but the National Football League appointed George Toma to handle the job. Call it luck or perhaps it was his forty years on-the-job training, or just being in the right place at the right time, but the fact that Toma continues to be in charge of these post-season events is evidence that he has done his job well.

George will be the first to admit that he could not do it by himself. He will also tell you that you're a sitting duck, being out there by yourself, with everybody taking potshots at you. 'I've been through the battles,' he will tell you. 'My back is full of holes where people took shots at me. I have the scars to prove it.'

Without his crew George couldn't get the job done. And what a crew he has. I met with Scott Martin, Doug Schallenberg, Brian O'Neill, David Jones, Andre Bruce, Jason Cooper, Rick Toma, Wilford Bruce, Rich Edmonson and Chip Toma — solid professionals who have a job to do with so little time to do it in. Yet without constant overseeing by George, they were hard at work, day in and day out for 22 solid days without a break.

I have often wondered who will replace us when we are ready to hang it up. Where will we get those experienced people? I was able to come away from San Diego feeling a little more comfortable that the future lies with these young people. Like George says, a few of these kids are ready now to take over head jobs in the major leagues. In speaking with a few of them, most of them felt that they still had a lot more to learn. With guys like George's crew and others around the leagues that are committed and dedicated to their work, I know we are in good hands. The future will be glowing.