



Lead-Up

ADAPTING AS A LEADER

Written by Mark Wiebe, Assistant Superintendent, Oakdale G&CC.

We all know what it's like to start a new job. These first few days, months, or years may be cautious and questioning at first, but they are usually leading us towards something; hopefully a better version of ourselves.

Most of us have these defining memories of adapting to a new environment and a new team. Times thereafter seem to reflect what has been established between oneself and one's teammates within this "lead-up."

Many of us have had help along the way. Mentors assist in shaping leadership styles, decision making skills, and overall work personas. Through the efforts of these individuals and the unique journeys of every career path, a better understanding of oneself develops over time. Like the effort required to introspect and be mindful, we may also put consistent effort into becoming more aware of those around us. If our own perceptions paired with those of everyone around us equals a whole, then awareness of this collective mind could become an important part of our adaptation as leaders.

INTRAPERSONAL EVOLUTIONS

Although the steps we take through our respective industries will vary, we're all going through a similar journey within ourselves. A uniquely human experience: it's a journey that can, at times, seem elusive, out of reach, or cliché. But, traversing this landscape builds and rebuilds foundations that help us weather future storms. These

inner foundations become their own source of energy and knowledge. Knowing everyone else is experiencing something similar, we empathize.

Apart from bringing us closer to a viewpoint of understanding, every time we make these intrapersonal evolutions, we're also continuing to adapt the inner workings of our own leader: our inner voice, directing mind, or decision making. We all do it. Spending time reflecting on one's words and actions is natural and could even be said to be an essential part of human evolution.

Understanding the source, cause, or reason behind one's words and actions may require more effort. After a time, our empathetic viewpoint may consider the interconnecting nature of our own journey with everyone else's; the more awareness and understanding we have with ourselves, the more we have with those around us.

If we do not make and maintain consistent improvements upon the state of the work environment as a whole, then it may be manipulated and shaped into something undesirable, conflicting, and imbalanced.

RELATIONSHIP AWARENESS

By becoming more aware of our teammates, we can learn more about their strengths, weaknesses, preferences, etc., and that much like our own, they are interchangeable under different circumstances.

While it's not entirely up to the leader to eradicate negativity that may enter the work scene, it is a leader's responsibility to try to maintain a peaceful environment by practicing the will to communicate. By encouraging the team to get to know one another, we can all become aware of what makes each other tick, or on the contrary, feel fulfilled and most content in our roles. Good communication and mindfulness within the group will help avoid or at least tame the negative emotions

that can cause thoughts and actions to stray.

But effective communication isn't always so straightforward as it often requires different delivery styles or doses, as well as the will to communicate. For some, communication comes as second nature, but for others, finding the will takes a special spark, or a jolt of energy and excitement, something to motivate them as social creatures to make eye contact and communicate.

Those who have to work a little harder to practice effective communication face some sort of perceived negativity in association with the act, like for example the novel concept of contingent fear of the unknown. Accepting the unknown and finding a way to alter any negativity into positivity, or just a neutral respect, also takes a certain amount of effort by all parties involved. If we can better understand the things that animate a person's or group's willpower to eradicate negative thoughts, we can then provide significant support, encouraging team members to step outside of their comfort zones.

If ultimately there's two different sources of motivation exuding from any individual or group, one of chaos and conflict and another of order and cooperation, it's up to us as individuals to choose the latter. As well as doing our best to choose the correct responses, we can also do our best to create an environment that stimulates that second source of motivation. Working in this cyclical pattern, the behaviours and actions of each individual has some kind of effect on the team as a whole. Leaders typically have the biggest impact on their respective environments, social and otherwise.

Always changing and adapting to its environment, this living manifestation of a team's moral or personality has the potential to either keep us confined as individuals, or free us into team synergy.

THE WHOLE

Creating, maintaining, and improving upon the state of a whole, that is, a collective mind, mood or personality occupying any social or team environment can only be a dynamic process. Or is it?

Just as much of a living, breathing entity surviving in the same state of constant change as our golf courses, recognizing the whole's existence is the first and biggest step. Like recognizing the dynamic between our own strengths and weaknesses, we may also recognize the importance of existing between the strengths and weaknesses of the team as a whole.

If we do not create and maintain consistent improvements upon the state of the work environment as a whole, then it may be manipulated and shaped into something undesirable, conflicting, and imbalanced. Established behaviours of a positive work culture and the systems and processes in place to govern are some key ingredients, but these too should be adaptable to an ever-changing environment.

Although maybe meant to be at first cautious and questioning, our adaptation as leaders never really ends. As if continuously arriving for our first day at a new job, we may therefore choose to treat it as if we'll never quite arrive. Much like the ever-changing natural environments affecting golf courses and the evolutionary nature of survival, adapting as a leader is a perpetual process. But, taken on by a free and driven will and a sincere desire to continue improving, it's a process that will always lead-up to a better version of ourselves, our teams and our golf courses. ■

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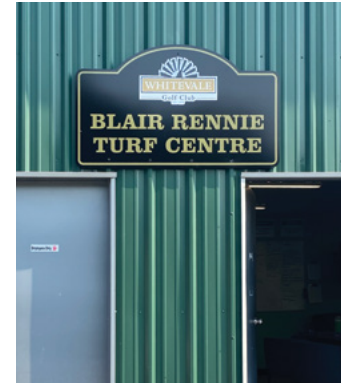
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TOGETHER WE TURF

Blair Rennie



Written by & photos provided by Nigel Rennie, Chief Integration Officer, Specialty Products, Allturf and Brother.

On Thursday September 12th Whitevale GC took time to pay homage to the man they called their golf course superintendent for 20 years, Blair Rennie. Blair passed away on April 30th after suffering a brain haemorrhage 2 weeks earlier. While it's not unusual for a club to recognize a loyal employee with a tree planting or a bench on a tee, Whitevale's recognition went to a different level. The Board of Directors informed the family that not only would they be naming the new maintenance facility completed in 2020 after Blair, but he would be the first non-member to be inducted into their Wall of Fame. Normally a process that takes place every 5 years accepting proposals for entrance, and accepting only 2 inductees per cycle, the board fast tracked his recognition for the highest honour available within Whitevale. Here is the address given at the reception and unveiling.

"Blair spent 20 years of his professional career at Whitevale Golf Club, where his dedication and warmth left a lasting impact on both members and colleagues. Known for his great sense of humour, great smile and friendly wave of greeting, Blair brought laughter to those around him, making every moment memorable. A man of deep familial love, Blair's greatest pride was his family. His unwavering support and unconditional love were the cornerstones of their lives. He nurtured his sons with kindness and taught them the value of integrity and hard work. Blair will be remembered for his generous spirit and ability to make everyone feel like a friend. He leaves behind a legacy of love, laughter, and cherished memories that

will be forever held in the hearts of those who knew him.

In March of 2004, a committee was formed to hire a new greens superintendent. During the interviewing process, the committee was impressed with the fact that Blair walked the course twice before his interview and made observations about erosion and tarps for the greens and tee decks. He also asked if the McBroom contract had been signed yet and said if hired, he would look forward to managing that project. Of all the candidates, the committee unanimously chose Blair. He then became Whitevale's fourth greens superintendent in April 2004. Blair graduated from the University of Massachusetts with a Certificate in turf management, and then from Seneca College with a Diploma in Turf Management. His experience prior to joining Whitevale included superintendent of Unionville Golf Centre, an internship at Beacon Hall, superintendent at Emerald Hills, and Diamondback Golf Courses; hosting several PGA Buy.com and Nationwide events at the latter. There is not an area of our golf club where he has not made a significant mark on the course and facilities over the 20 years that he was our superintendent. Blair played a vital role in our course re-design and overseeing the construction, the new clubhouse, and practice grounds project, the Blair Rennie Turf Center, and most recently plans for our bunker renovation project. He was a leader by example and was well respected by his staff. He was a mentor, particularly to Kyle Young over the 20 years they worked together. It is through this relationship and friendship that we are extremely fortunate that Kyle is now capable of managing our turf team going forward as our fifth superintendent. Blair taught his team to

respond to the forces of Mother Nature, solve mechanical issues, and maintain the course to the standards the membership demanded and expected, and he always came through. He just said a few days before he passed away that in his 20 years the course conditions for our opening were the best he had ever seen; it was too bad he was not able to be there for it. Blair was open to suggestions from the membership and would try to accommodate all requests. But as everyone on the previous boards know, he would stand up for what he felt was right for the Club even if it was not popular with some of the membership. For that we are grateful because there is no doubt, we have a world-class facility golf course, turf shop, and practice range. Blair was highly respected by the golfing community and his fellow greens superintendents in Ontario. He presented experiences with colleagues at conferences and maintained long standing memberships in both the Canadian and Ontario Golf Superintendents' Associations. When we did member tours of our new turf facility, which Blair wanted to do, his look of pride and joy was plainly evident as he led the tours and explained how the operations worked. As we play our fine course, we will miss seeing him out in his cart coming into sight with his infectious smile, unique wave, and always willing to engage in a friendly chat. Blair, you will always be in our minds and hearts!"

The Rennie family, including his wife Cristina and twins Ben and Jake are very grateful for this honour establishing Blairs' legacy as a builder of what Whitevale GC has become. The actions by the Board of Directors are a testament to the culture of the club's members and appreciation of the role of the Golf Course Superintendent as a critical part of the club's success. ■