

IMPROVING YOUR E.Q.

by **TIM MORAGHAN**

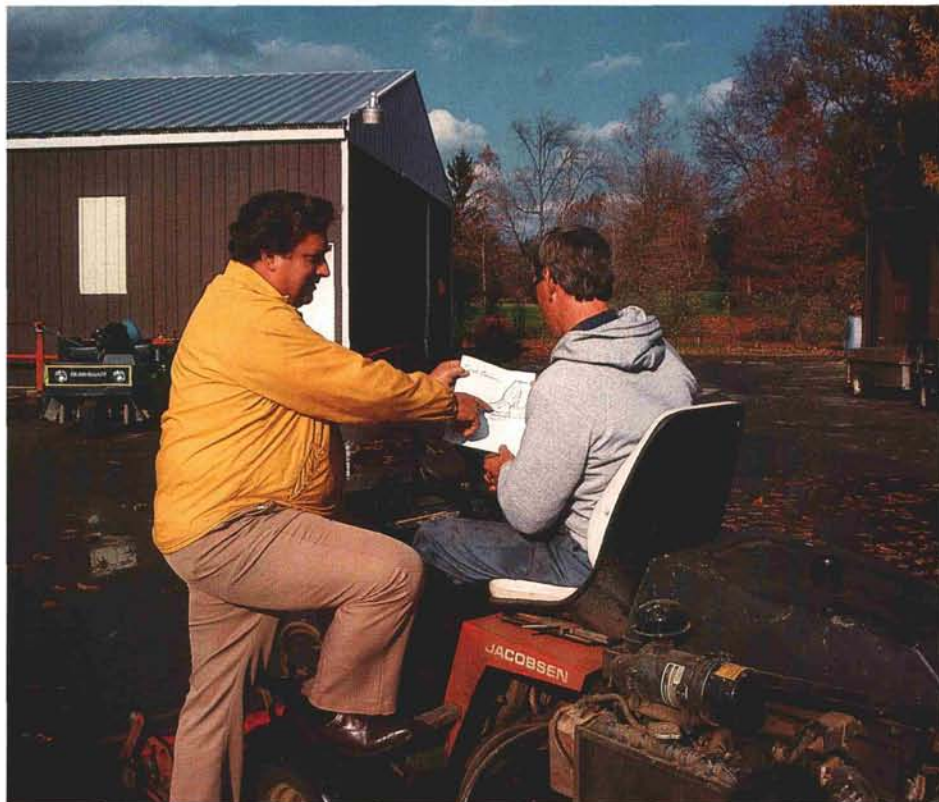
Agronomist for Championships, USGA Green Section

THERE WAS A TIME when an individual's ability to succeed at a chosen endeavor was in part governed by that hard-to-define term the intelligence quotient. Nowadays, dealing effectively with your golf course maintenance staff depends on your ability to develop their "E.Q." (ear quotient), or how well they listen and react. Too much valuable time can be wasted repeating simple requests and directions. Therefore, your success as a golf course superintendent is based upon your ability to communicate and listen effectively.

A superintendent's efforts to streamline maintenance operations can be a breeding ground for creativity. Such has been the case for Joe Hahn, of Oak Hill Country Club, in Rochester, N.Y., and Charles Joachim, of Champions Golf Club, in Houston, Texas. Each had concerns with creating effective communications channels between themselves and their employees. Each found himself responsible for the management of an expansive 36-hole golf course, a sizeable staff, a course renovation program, and an upcoming golf championship.

When words fail, that's when visual aids are the solution. In playing host to the 1989 U.S. Open, a major concern of Hahn's was to protect sensitive areas of the course from vehicular traffic, particularly the roughs. Many of these important rough areas were shaded and received a high rate of traffic from golf carts and maintenance personnel. Controlling the golf cart traffic was not so tough, but his maintenance staff presented a different set of problems. Hahn's solution was to take a map of the golf course and reduce it to a pocket-size version that could be mounted on the equipment or carried around by each crew member.

The features of the map were enhanced by using different colors. Red was used to indicate areas to be avoided, and green denoted areas safe for travel. Also, Hahn added the location of specific haul roads, the entrance and exit from the club grounds, and the position of the maintenance facility. With all this valuable information pre-



Joe Hahn, superintendent at Oak Hill Country Club (N.Y.), showing an employee the best route to take on a pocket-sized map of the course.

sented in a neat, compact form, Hahn didn't have to spend his valuable time repeating directions. These small and efficient maps were inexpensive to produce and were a valuable asset to newly hired personnel.

Joachim's communication problems at Champions Golf Club were similar to Oak Hill's, but were complicated by a complete course renovation project and a Hispanic labor force. His objectives included decreasing the number of times directions had to be repeated to employees trying to locate work areas, minimizing the time it took to cross the course, and helping his new employees learn their way around 36 holes of golf. He decided that an aerial photograph, which would show all of the important features of the course, would help him meet his objectives. He found a company that would fly low over the course,

take a series of pictures, splice the shots together, and enlarge the photo to a scale of one inch to 100 feet. The results were two six-foot by eight-foot black-and-white photos of the course that are now mounted on the wall of the lunchroom.

The finished product is framed, mounted, and protected by a Plexiglas cover. Also, by using a Plexiglas cover, irrigation lines, heads, valves, control boxes, and all access points to and from the highways and the location of the shop can be added. The map is large and easy to read, and it is easy to locate any feature on the golf course. By mounting the map in the lunchroom, it is in plain sight for everyone to view when assignments are handed out. The total cost of this project was \$1,000, a mighty small price to pay to improve Champion's "E.Q."