

When was the last time you scrutinized your health as closely as the turf we grow for a living? We all know that with proper care and nurturing, turfgrass will withstand a tremendous amount of abuse.

What about the human body? Your body in particular? Allow me to divert from our normal message in this column, and share with you my recent experience. There is a message for everyone. If one of you is reached by it, we are all better off.

I visited my family doctor in the spring of 1998 in an effort to appease my wife. No joking! The first time we went to the doctor and they asked me what was wrong, I pointed to Marcy and told them to ask her. She told them that at nighttime my breathing had become labored, and snoring was presenting a problem for her efforts to sleep.

I had experienced several serious lung infections in the last five years. X-rays revealed nothing serious, and another mild case of bronchitis was suspected. Antibiotics offered no relief to my symptoms. After further tests I was pronounced to have developed asthma.

By midsummer things were deteriorating to the stage, that not only was it impossible for Marcy to sleep at night, some nights I couldn't sleep either. At our insistence, we were referred to a pulmonary specialist. Initially attempting to change inhalers that I had been prescribed for usage at night, he followed a conservative yet methodical attempt to eliminate possible causes for my problem.

Allow me to interject a sidebar. At this stage of my story, it is mid-July, and I am still in denial. I honestly did not believe that there was anything wrong with me. Other people sometimes questioned the wheezing that occurred with each breath. However, the change was so subtle it was almost indiscernible to me. It would not be until mid-August that I

accepted the fact that possibly something was wrong.

Little improvement from the change in inhalers was noted by the pulmonary specialist. The next order of business was a Pulmonary Function Test that measures different parameters in your lung's ability to function properly. Within two days of taking the test, I received a call from the doctor. My performance on one portion of the test was extremely poor, and he suspected a problem with the machine. I was prescribed to take a massive amount of steroids over the weekend and retake that portion of the test on Monday morning. Later that week (it is now the end of August), my doctor announced with great conviction that I did not have asthma. Something was **WRONG!**

Within eight days and after three diagnostic procedures, I was diagnosed with a cancerous growth in my left main bronchus. The shocker was the discovery that the normal procedure for its removal also entailed the removal of the left lung. I was stunned by this pronouncement.

I was fortunate. After much researching, networking and consulting with different physicians, and fighting with our insurance company, I was afforded the opportunity to go to Boston and have surgery performed by a pioneer in airway reconstruction. My lung was saved, and in the words of my pulmonary specialist after repeating the Pulmonary Function Test and office visit, I am a new man. It was truly a humbling experience. Now the moral of the story.

Don't take your health for granted. As you can see from my experience, you can not afford to. Go to the doctor and have a physical. Start an exercise program. Eat healthily. Whatever you decide, just remember the next time your turf is ailing, take time to reflect about your own health. Utilize the same thought processes that you employ to diagnose your turf's problem and compare them with how you have been feeling lately. Finally, take it from someone who now appreciates the adage, "When you have your health, you have everything!"

When You Have Your Health, You Have It All

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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