Client questionnaires, if handled properly, can help peg your market

By Timothy Grayson

Since August I've been helping a client make the most of the summer deluge. Unless you were on the East coast, which had its own problems with water (i.e., not enough) you know only too well how Noah felt. The summer of 1993 left a spongy bog through most of the Midwest. It's tough to take, and the cost of lost revenue and repairs could be enormous. But in instances such as my client’s, Mother Nature simply provoked an overdue restoration. Take heart. Augusta National had the same problems a few years back.

When I first met with my client, he was beside himself. Three complete holes and one other green had been submerged for a month. Lucky for him, insurance would cover most of the repairs.

Dick Stutz
Superintendent
Alvamar Country Club
Lawrence, Kansas

"With the amount of flooding and heat we've had this season, most preemergence herbicides would have fizzled out by now — but not Barricade. It's still giving us excellent control."

He talked for about an hour, detailing what had to be repaired and the changes he was going to make. At the end of his monologue, I asked what kind of changes his patrons would like.

It was a sensible question: the course required repair, and the construction provided an opportunity to upgrade or change the course. The only question remaining was what to change.

Our initial task was to make the changes we wanted — primarily for reasons of vanity. By the end of our first hour together, however, we had begun to think about changes to suit the golfers instead.

Where to begin? The season was over, and like many courses the customer records were not particularly extensive. But season pass records for the previous few years were available. So we created a simple questionnaire and sent it to every green.