

Winter's mess

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Corcoran, new to the club, has had a rough initiation. "Last year, members were playing golf the first week of March here. We'll be hard pressed to open at the end of April," he said. "It's been a hell of a starting year. Mother Nature has given me a pretty nasty welcome."

Old Man Winter also has taken

his toll on maintenance budgets. "Most of my guys are putting in 20 hours of overtime each week to get the course back on track," Corcoran said. "Add on equipment rentals to clear snow and ice, and you have a big impact on the budget."

AN EXHAUSTING RECOVERY

Construction projects also have suffered from the harsh season.

"It's horrible," said Paul B.

Latshaw, superintendent at the Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, N.Y. "We're in the middle of a \$3.1-million dollar restoration project that includes the installation of a new irrigation system. If you're trying to do construction, this past winter has just been absolutely brutal. We were well above 100 inches of snow here when we usually average about 93 inches. Then, in the middle of winter, we had

thaws that would only freeze up again and again."

The construction project is in preparation for the 2003 PGA Championship tournament to be held at the Oak Hill facility. "We started construction this past September, when Landscapes Unlimited pulled in," said Latshaw. "Unfortunately, we went into spring this year with at least eight inches of snow cover."

Winterkill worries are less

pressing for the superintendent than snow mold this season. "Early spring, we only saw grass on the greens for half a day at tops," he said. "Then we'd be hit with six more inches of snow. My big concern is snow mold. We had protection down, but we weren't able to re-apply a mid-to-late winter application to get us over the hump. I know we have a lot of pink and gray snow mold in our roughs."

It will take a long and exhausting recovery effort to get the ball rolling again at Oak Hill. "Being snow covered for so long, we're going to have a lot of damage to the turf," Latshaw said. "Combined with the construction project, it's going to be like you can't imagine."

Superintendent John Zimmer, Jr., at the Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, Pa., has also battled wicked weather undertaking the installation of a new irrigation system on the course. The course started the project on Oct. 20 last year and he hopes to be completed by the first of June. "It's been a terrible winter that has not cooperated at all," Zimmer said. "We had to run snow blowers most of the winter just to keep working."

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

Latshaw's father, Paul R. Latshaw, the superintendent at the Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y., also knows the discouraging results of this past Northeast season. "The snow's off the ground," he said, "but it's like a mud hole here. Compared to last year, we're way behind to the start of the season. We've had a very severe winter."

The elder Latshaw, however, believes he has stumbled upon the solution to this havoc-wreaking weather. "This is only my second season here, and I've had enough of the winter in the Northeast. I'm retiring this year," he said, "and as I told my wife at the retirement party, 'I'm going to do some consulting work and stick south of the Mason-Dixon Line.'" ■

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