A LETTER TO MEMBERS

Getting them to realize how hard it is to keep a course both playable and enjoyable.

I write this column every month with you, the superintendent, in mind. I try to make your life easier, more interesting, educational, and just plain fun. Your comments keep me going and give me ideas for future subjects. But this month's column isn't intended for you but for the people you serve, the golfers who enjoy the fruits of your labors, and address some of their concerns and complaints about maintenance.

It's obvious no one is having success getting through to real golfers about how hard it is to keep a course both playable and enjoyable. Our national organizations aren't doing enough, and according to many of you, your clubs aren't either. So let me try. Feel free to cut out the letter below and post it in the locker room or somewhere else you think it will do the most good.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Check out this issue's app edition and/or online edition for a downloadable and printable PDF of Tim's letter.

Dear Golfer:

On behalf of superintendents everywhere, I hope you have a great round today. There's no better game in the world than golf and nowhere better to play it. However, in the current economic climate and this is true wherever you're reading this - it is very difficult to provide quality playing conditions when dealing with reduced staffing, old equipment, cost cutting and small budgets.

Add to that list one more item: complaining from the members/golfers like you.

As a club member or fee-paying guest, you are entitled to complain about poor conditions or problems on the course. However, it never fails to amaze me how people who are otherwise successful and astute in their own businesses can become so emotional and irrational about an area in which they have very little knowledge.

Just because you have a backyard or a garden does not make you qualified to be a golf course superintendent. GCs have spent years in school and on the job learning and honing their craft. They are experts in chemistry, biology, agronomy, turf science, entomology, tree management and much, much more.

Please do not judge a golf course simply by how "pretty" you think it is. Making a course pretty also can make it unhealthy. You want a course to be playable for as many different types of golfers as possible as well as attractive.

The greatest cause of harm to a golf course isn't weather or weeds or bugs. It's golfers, particularly those who don't do the little things - rake bunkers, fix ball marks, repair divots, drive on cart paths, pick up garbage (like broken tees) - that are vital to the course's health.

What's that old line from the 1960s? "You're part of the solution or part of the problem." Here are a few other things you might not know. Don't jump to conclusions if you see an irrigation system running during or soon after a rainstorm. Some courses are required to dump effluent water periodically to meet environmental regulations. Irrigation systems need to be checked regularly to monitor sprinkler heads and throw patterns. Perhaps your superintendent is irrigating new sod or seed, or watering in new chemical applications.

Speaking of rain, have you ever wondered what happens to grass after a downpour? Before complaining that the rough is too long, consider the damage a two-ton piece of equipment would do to soggy soil and turfgrass.

If you spot unraked footprints in a bunker, don't assume someone on the grounds crew put them there. Chances are it was another golfer who was too lazy to clean up after himself. And speaking of bunkers, don't complain about their slopes breaking down if you and your buddies walk up and down them to get in and out of the sand. Walk in and out at the lowest, flattest point and the bunkers will stay in better shape longer.

Don't get me started on greens. Yes, they have to be aerified (otherwise they'll decline). Someone isn't going to like their speed, but the course has to be set up for the greatest good, not the small percentage of players who really are good - or think they are. Furthermore, green speed changes every hour based on weather, traffic, environment and the time of year. Yes, hole positions must move every day or else one area of the green will get too much traffic and suffer.

And yes, ball marks really do damage greens and are all golfers' responsibility to repair. Particularly the golfers who made them.

As for the weather? It's not an excuse, it's a fact.

I'm not saying golfers sometimes don't have the right, even the obligation, to complain about course conditions.

(MORAGHAN continues on page 56)
Hey.

Do you sell stuff to superintendents?

We notice you’re reading this page.

Thousands of your customers are doing exactly the same thing.

GUESS WHAT?

GCI: PARTNER WITH US

PRINT / DIGITAL / WEB / MOBILE /
APPS / SOCIAL / CUSTOM
mediakit.golfcourseindustry.com

They do. But only when they know what they’re talking about and have first made an effort to understand the situation, talk to the superintendent, and ask intelligent questions.

Because as I said above, the golfer is just as responsible for a course’s condition as the superintendent is. (Among the best things you can do is help others in your group understand their effect on the course and take better care of it.)

Finally, please thank your superintendent every once in a while for the terrific job he or she is doing under difficult, and constantly changing, conditions. Say hello, strike up a conversation, and you never know what you might learn. You might even get some helpful tips for that backyard garden you have at home.

Enjoy your game, enjoy your course,

Tim Moraghan
Principal
ASPIRE Golf

No Water. No Sewer. No Problem.

Clivus Multrum
M54 Trailhead
Composting toilet system & building

Contact us to learn more 800.425.4887  www.clivusmultrum.com

FOR MORE
To read John Kaminski’s Green Section article “Interns: A valuable resource with the upper hand,” click bit.ly/lgVkaGm or enter it into your web browser.

(KAMINSKI continued from page 46)