

What's that old adage about sausage? Oh, yeah — people like to eat it as long as you don't tell them what it's made from.

I realize you're asking yourself: What does that adage have to do with golf course maintenance? For starters, both sausage and golf start with links. (Insert your own rim shot here.)

I contend golfers are like sausage eaters. They love to play the game, idolize the legends of the game and buy the latest and greatest equipment and all the latest game-improving gimmicks. They don't really want to know what goes into the maintenance of the courses they play. They only want to gorge themselves on the finished product — and to heck with the details.

In that sense, the art of golf course maintenance is like making sausage. It often isn't pretty. The ingredients and preservatives must be managed carefully for quality control, and it can be downright messy at times (not that verticutting and aerifying are anything like meat grinding).

But sausage eaters — er, I mean golfers — don't give a kielbasa about the process as long as they can savor the final flavor of the links. Details about water restrictions and water quality, and the removal of the latest pest-fighting ingredients from the superintendent's pantry are ignored or overlooked because golfers don't want to know — just like they don't want to know which cow and pig parts have been stuffed into the sausage casing they're enjoying with their sunnyside-up eggs.

Negative stories in the newspaper or on TV that allude to the use of dangerous, toxic pesticides on golf courses are all too common. Yet how many times have you seen golfers write letters to the editors supporting their golf courses when they're under attack? Not often, I'll wager.

One of the reasons golfers don't rally to our defense is they don't know if the story is true or not. I guess most of them have that sausage-for-brains mentality that what they don't know won't hurt them.

According to Frank Rossi, assistant professor of turfgrass science at Cornell University, a survey of golfers about how they view their health and safety on golf courses provided

Golfers Are Like Sausage Eaters

BY JOEL JACKSON



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some disturbing numbers. It showed one-third thought there might be something to the negative media claims; one-third thought they were safe; and one-third had no idea whether they were safe or not.

Those numbers bother me. What they tell me is that two-thirds of the golfers think there could be a health or environmental problem, and yet they still play the game. Two-thirds aren't educating themselves about what we do.

If I was a rank-and-file golfer, I'd like to know that the course I play was operating by the rules for applying pesticides. I'd like to know that there are labels which govern the use of pesticides. I'd like to know those products have undergone years of research and testing before they ever made it to my golf course. I'd like to know that the people handling and applying those chemicals are licensed and trained.

If I knew all that and then I saw newspaper and TV stories that sensationalize pesticide stories, I'd be angry that the media and the anti-golf groups get so much air time and headline space for spouting off a bunch of tripe about the game I love and enjoy. Maybe if I was informed about my golf course, I'd write a letter to the editor and tell those cranks and hacks to stuff it.

They say knowledge is power. So why isn't our side of the business as powerful as the sticks-and-balls group when it comes to capturing the public's attention? We could use their help, but it seems golfers, tour players, owners and developers don't really want to know what goes into making a golf course green and enjoyable to play.

For these people, ignorance is bliss and silence is a golden brown-and-serve sausage — the ingredient list be damned.

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