

Recently the topic of “meeting the golfer’s expectations” has taken up much editorial space in many of our trade magazines. This is fine and dandy, as long as the information is well researched and well intended. But there was one thing that was glaringly absent from some of these articles — quotes from actual golfers.

It seems to me some of these expectations that we assume are being placed upon us by the golfers are really expectations we’re placing upon ourselves. I think it’s quite obvious we all want our courses to look and play great all the time. Isn’t that part of our success as superintendents? We don’t sit around and ask for excessive heat and humidity during summer, do we? Of course not. We are the ones who expect our golf courses to be perfect. Consider these points:

► **OF COURSE** we want our greens to be the smoothest and fastest around while at the same time be lush and green and healthy instead of on the brink of death.

► **OF COURSE** we want the tees to be able to withstand the wear and tear of five outings a week and still look great for our regulars.

► **OF COURSE** the fairways should always be green and striped and disease- and weed-free at all times.

► **OF COURSE** we want our courses to look the best they can and blemish-free at all times.

I think if you were to ask one of your golfers what his or her actual expectations were, you might find him or her to have a much higher tolerance threshold than you thought.

I’ve had my share of moments when the perfectionist in me was rearing his ugly head, and I was not at all happy with how my course was looking. Then along would come a regular with a compliment about how good the course was looking and playing.

What I would like to do is put a little twist on this whole “expectations” issue. What I’ve become interested in lately is this: What are the superintendents’ expectations of the golfers? I mean, here we are, caretakers of this vast and wonderful acreage called a golf course. All summer long we fret and worry sunup to sundown, wondering whether the turf is going to be OK.

Golf and Its Great Expectations

BY JIM BLACK



WHAT I EXPECT
FROM GOLFERS IS
TO AT LEAST HAVE A
SHRED OF RESPECT
FOR WHAT I’VE PUT
IN FRONT OF THEM
FOR THEIR
ENJOYMENT

Spray tomorrow? Fertilize tomorrow? Aerify? Spike? Seed? Water? Drain? We’re incessantly babying and tweaking our programs for the benefit of the course and worrying and wondering if we’re doing the right things to keep it all alive.

Then along comes Mr. Joe Golfer. He doesn’t have your worries today. In fact, he’s taken the day off from work and has no worries at all. What I expect out of Mr. Joe Golfer is for him to at least have a shred of respect for what I have put in front of him for his golfing enjoyment.

Now consider these points:

► If we are “Cart Path Only” today, should I expect him to simply keep his golf car on the path — not just some of the time or most of the time but all of the time? **OF COURSE.**

► If he hits his approach shot fat and sends the ball halfway to the green, should I expect him to shake off the mishit and hit his next shot without immediately throwing down another ball to hit a do-over — and excavating another divot that is also not likely to be replaced? **OF COURSE.**

► If his next shot enters into an area where some of my staff may be working on something, should I expect him to give them some sort of “heads-up” so they can move to safety? **OF COURSE.**

► Should I expect Joe Golfer (and Josephine Golfer) to do those things that all golfers should be taught the first time they pick up a golf club — namely repairing ballmarks, replacing divots and raking bunkers? **OF COURSE.**

► Do I think that maybe we should all lighten up on ourselves a little, be proud of what we accomplish and enjoy the fact that we get to be on a golf course every day? **OF COURSE.**

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