What Is It You Do In The Winter?

By NATE USELDING
Assistant Superintendent, Dellwood Hills Golf Club

When you are out and about meeting new people, the standard question asked is, as an icebreaker, "what do you do for a living?" Everyone loves to talk about themselves so this is a perfect way for two people to engage in a conversation, talking about work. Now, when you ask me what I do and I respond with, "I am an assistant superintendent of a golf course," you generally receive two responses. First, the courtesy, "oh really?" followed by a puzzled look on their face. Not only did I say I worked for a golf course, but I also said I was an assistant to something. Now they are really confused and with a slight cock of the head, their follow-up question is, "So, what do you do at the golf course?"

This question is easy in the summer. I manage a golf course and I make it look and play the way it does everyday. At this time of year, you have to go into much greater detail because you know the next question. "What do you do during the winter?" When I am asked this question my first reaction is to laugh and say not much, but in all actuality, we get a lot accomplished in the winter. The winter months are a more stress-free, laid back time of year. It is becoming a thing of the past with plastic hazard stakes and all weather wood. Back in the day painting pieces on the course we had to cover. There are some crazy ideas that get brought up but that is what we want to encourage, creative thinking. It is also a time to read up on all our publications we receive throughout the year. Numerous times we will toss aside a publication or just skim over it in the summer. The winter months give us an opportunity to catch up on key articles that pertain to us.

Clean and reorganize our facility. It is very easy to overlook misplaced items during the season when time is tight. I'm not talking about a misplaced shovel, I'm talking big items that don't get put back on the shelves or up in the rafters. It is amazing how time goes by and certain things don't get done. We are starting our third year in our new facility and we are still working out kinks to make our operation run smoothly. Each year we find better ways to maximize productivity.

Plowing. The clubhouse is open year round, and we maintain the sidewalks along with our maintenance facility's parking lot when it snows. This isn't a big deal because most of what our job entails is weather dependent, rain or snow.

Audubon Society. I am currently taking on this project for Dellwood Hills to become a certified course. This is very rewarding to me as I get my feet wet with many new issues and then I have the opportunity to implement them into our regime. It is a very time consuming process, and I dedicate about 8 hours a week to completing the project.

Everyday, it goes without fail, I answer questions about our profession because people are so intrigued with what we do. I am happy to tell them, I manage a team which performs maintenance tasks to a golf course, so when you come out and play, it looks and plays the best possible way. You see, back in college, I couldn't sell my major to someone within 30 seconds and now, as an assistant superintendent, I am happy to explain what I am passionate about. The more we can educate golfers on what we do, the more they will see our perspective and understand the ins and outs of our profession.

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