



## In Bounds: Exciting Time

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Spring, for me, the most exciting time of year. When shadows are visibly shorter, tree buds swell and lake ice begins to honey-comb. The smell of melting snow and the release of long-captured odors tantalize my nose. And I listen for my favorite seasonal harbinger, the red-winged blackbird, to proclaim his territory and announce that spring has finally arrived.

**To enjoy this feast of sensations** I only have to go outside, maybe sit at the base of a tree, breathe deep, and allow the sun to work its magic upon my face. I have never relied upon the wily woodchuck or for that matter, the more often wrong than right, weather forecaster to tell me "spring has sprung." In fact I am convinced that weather forecasters are doing much more harm than good in our industry.

There once was a time when the local news channels devoted no more than five minutes to climate conditions. Current readings were generated "from the airport," tomorrow's predictions came via telephone from Sioux Falls, South Dakota and long-range estimates were gleaned from reading the Farmer's Almanac. It was a simpler time, yet the details were fairly accurate due to their short-term nature, and limited an anxiety problem created by a psychological and sometimes physical problem I call weather expectationitis, or WE.

**The advent of satellite images, radio-relayed data from weather balloons** and Doppler radar generate a wealth of information and visually exciting media. Combine these statistics with attractive and articulate weather readers and a captive audience can be created, much to the delight of advertisement agencies everywhere. And because the presentation is laced with technical material and delivered with a sales pitch that makes used car vendors jealous, the average viewer can become addicted to the smooth promises made regardless of reality.

**Weather expectationitis takes hold of the audience.** Television weather reports have become more and more theatrical, with greater detail of forecasted future irrelevance, projected more frequently and longer over the course of a news report

that it almost appears as if the presentation model is straight from the pages of a BMP! The weather prediction industry has become so bold that viewers have a cable television channel dedicated to "the weather" available 24/7/365. Thus perpetuating WE and the behavior associated with this pathological malady.

The delivery of speculative weather projections has become an art and the captive viewers gobble up the prognostication as though it was fact. People love to watch the weather. No sooner is one weekend over, when the next weekend's weather is already on the radar of the news channels. Weather what, weather when and weather how are always in question. People live their lives by the weather and make plans according to the dispatcher's long-term guess. This can play havoc with our industry.

**Do you think that golfers think twice before making weekend plans one week ahead** if the outlook is gray and maybe wet? You bet they do. How many Thursday cancellations are caused by a not so sunny, but expensive anyway, Saturday projection? Ever wonder if a long-range forecast will limit resort activity in the northern sections of our state, impact a Guest Day or clip a wild hair golf idea? And how exact is the forecast!?? Even I know that the farther out you foretell, the less likely the projection will be right. What of the "professional" meteorologists? Don't bother trying to find any scientific statistical data pertaining to the accuracy of the forecasts, privately and publicly generated. There isn't any, I checked. So why all the hype?

**It is all in the packaging.** By golly, some of the weather projectionists are quite attractive. And their ability to zoom into an area, throw a three-dimensional map upon the screen and speculate as to the bright and sunny future is pretty intriguing. We all hang our hats on a bright and sunny forecast. And when a storm front is a half-mile away, the television screens are ablaze with details, down to the block next door. Then again, in these situations I am making my own short-term storm predictions because I like to watch them barrel down my boule-

vard, sometimes from the roof of my house or shop!! But all too often the long range, more than one day, estimation is inaccurate. Yet our clientele, especially those with WE, continue to watch with baited breath the too often inaccurate estimate of what is to come.

**Some weather communities have begun rating the conditions** for the day depending on the activity planned in relation with their weather estimate. Now I have to ask how that works. Who is responsible for a discriminate value placed upon the forecasted weather? What is the criteria? Too hot? Too cold? Clouds and/or precipitation? How truly arrogant for any individual, computer-generated scenario or weather service to tell me how much enjoyment I will get or expect using a gradation system dependent upon the activity I am planning. Ridiculous.

**Perhaps it is time that the meteorological industry be set on its heels a bit.** Maybe if all outdoor industries including garden centers, fishing enthusiasts and golf banded together and educated the forecasters as to the economic damage they are creating, we could change the system, or at least limit the injury. It is possible to plant flowers in showers, catch fish in the fog and play golf when it is windy.

**Instead of making it sound as though a rain out is imminent, claim the unstable cold front an opportunity for the true sportsman** who appreciates all of the challenges including a dynamic weather pattern, to take on a track and conquer it, catch fish under limited conditions and at the very least buy flowers at the outdoor market in anticipation of a break in the weather. Or better yet, limit the projections to a 48-hour period. At least then the forecast would be closer to accurate.

**Today is Thursday, February 16 and I am waiting with shovel close at hand for the "HUGE" snow event** the weather crystal ball watchers have been predicting since last Friday. Yesterday at lunch I told my mechanic that I thought the cold high pressure system coming down from Canada was going to limit any precipitation to the lower portions of our state and probably miss us completely. Yet I still arrived early to prepare for what the "professionals" claimed was coming our way.

**Just another storm of the year I guess.** Just another crappy long range forecast propagated by a pretty face. I saw my first Robin of the year earlier this week and am going out on a limb with this statement, "spring is coming."