



## In Bounds: *Plan B*

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Often asked, "What do you do during your free time Jack, play golf?" I pause and reflect before giving an answer.

Do I express that I don't play much golf? That I really can't justify another five or six hours upon a course where more than likely I have just spent ten hours? Or that I am into my vocation because I absolutely enjoy all of the challenging aspects of golf course management and my abilities to conquer those trials on a daily basis rather than my "love" for the game?

Nope, I simply state that when not at work I like to spend my free time at home doing household chores and projects.

For me working around and inside my home elicits a great sense of pride, particularly when you consider the skills I have developed are self-taught, almost inherent. My father, although a great wood hoarder, was much better with business dexterity than fixer-up talents.

**Using rudimentary knowledge and considerable trial and error time,** I have wired a basement, installed plumbing (including two toilets), hung sheetrock and taped, painted, papered, laid slate floors, built multiple decks and even set a rather incredible brick side walk.

Sound impressive? Well, to be honest it really isn't because I have been blessed with a skill that many of you have as well. We have refined the talent called "Plan B."

**"Plan B" is what you implement when "Plan A" doesn't work** the way it is supposed to typically due to situations seemingly beyond the individual's control. Conditions such as a stripped bolt caused by poor manufacturing, wallpaper that just won't size, incomplete or foreign language directions and measurements that although measured twice don't add up after the cut is made.

During times like these I take a break, reflect upon the challenge at hand and consider my options. Then I move onto "Plan B."

"Plan B" is a knack most successful golf course superintendents are quite proficient with. In fact, I would present to you that quite often we don't manage our golf courses, we manage our "Plan Bs."

For instance, what do you do when an hour prior to an event scheduled to go off

both nines at 7:30 becomes a shotgun at 7:45? "Plan B" is implemented. You make several radio calls, race like a bat out of hell across the golf course coordinating staff changes to make "Plan B" work without impacting play. Typically nobody even knows that you and your team were under the gun at all.

Or perhaps late on a Friday afternoon a significant irrigation break occurs. You rally your limited staff for a big dig, maybe cap one line or reroute another because a part is unavailable, program your system to compensate for the changes in flow and thank the staff for their hard work. You then lock up your shop and go home comfortable in knowing that "Plan B" is in place and will be successful until the parts become available on Monday.

**There is no book on how to implement "Plan B."** Rather it is a talent learned through continuous placement in positions where an individual has to think outside the box and apply alternative variables to achieve a greater than satisfactory outcome.

Everyone associated with a golf club knows their Superintendent has "Plan B" folded up in his back pocket just in case it is needed. After all, who gets the call when a party moves from the indoors out and the furniture needs to be moved, the P.A. communication system fails, a cabinet is stuck, a lost dog is found or data is needed immediately for an impromptu Board Meeting? The Superintendent, of course!

With quick thinking the Super

intendent reaches deep within himself and thinks "Plan B." He brings a trailer up to move the furniture expeditiously, plugs in the electronics, uses candle wax to slick a stuck drawer, looks on the dog's collar, finds the owner's phone number and gives them a call, and clips and pastes notes from previous Green Committee meetings onto a memo to be forwarded to the BOD. Having "Plan B" makes everything the superintendent does easier.

**It is said that all department heads at a golf club operation are formed from very different molds.** Yet within each individual sector of the industry there lie distinct characteristics. General Managers are GMs, pros are pros, chefs are chefs and superintendents are superintendents.

I cannot comment on the other sectors, but I believe that in general superintendents are persistent, cunning, appreciative, retentive, demanding, educated and attentive. But perhaps their most important trait is the ability to implement "Plan B" at a moment's notice because everyday is a "Plan B" day.

Whether at work or relaxing on a project at home, I am inherently aware of my abilities. Some tasks come easy and can be pulled off smooth as silk, while others require me to implement "Plan B," the most important tool in my tool box.

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