



Livin' the Dream!

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Editor

Darkness greets me every morning. Eyes open, yet seemingly shut, I feel my way quietly, so as not to wake my wife, out of the bedroom. Door closed, my hand reaches for the switch that will bring artificial light to my pitch black world.

Starlit pre-dawn hours in the spring and summer relinquish their hold as the sun quickly rises. I embrace the seemingly long days and the opportunities therein. However, not so much in the fall and winter when my world is dark for too many hours, my time outside abbreviated.

With the onset of noticeably shorter days I find myself going into a funk of sorts. Indeed my work load is less; the pressures of 10.5 plus

plus green speeds, perfect bunkers and a completely line-trimmed course are impossible to achieve as my staff evaporates back to school. Nor are player demands quite as critical as they were during the peak season in the months of June, July and August. No longer do I spend over 60 hours a week plying my trade at 'the club.'

Now I have time to pick up and implement the 'to do' list at home, generated as I shift gears from superintendent to homeowner prior to the first snow fall.

Don't misunderstand me, I relish the opportunity and love to improve my space at home, this year an extension of the deck, but as the days grow shorter I feel a mild depression for soon I will be home or office bound with no green grass to monitor and manage. Of course I will be able to occupy my work days with tree trimming, book keeping and taking advantage of educational opportunities. And I can paint the living room, refinish some furniture and wax my wife's car. But it won't be long before I become bored with the benign trappings of winter.

Sure, I look forward to skiing, catching up on a few good books, sharing a bowl of popcorn with my bride while watching the glower of a raging bonfire. Turkey Day will return my children from school and a rotisserie 'big bird' and both

sophisticated and sophomoric conversation will satiate all of our appetites. Sleeping in (maybe until 6:00 am) could feel pretty good, but I tend to get restless after 5:00. Linger over a cup of tea accompanied by gooey caramel rolls or Christmas cookies will conjure memories of youth, gifts, gratefulness and joy. And gathering with friends and family will elicit reflection upon the freedoms our great country offers. Yet my life will feel incomplete.

Call me crazy (some really do!), but I love to work my chosen vocation and would prefer the off-season be shorter by six weeks, maybe eight. The winter sol-

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stice and the lengthening of daylight hours cannot arrive soon enough nor the first week of February when the average low temperature of one degree drifts ever so slowly upward. Not even a January thaw will defuse the clouds of mild depression I seem to start suffering shortly after the last leaf has been mulched and covers applied to the greens. So what is wrong with me?

No, I do not think it is Seasonal Affective Disorder. My energy level does not decrease or appetite for starchy and sugary foods increase after the first frost. In fact, I often find an abundance of winter vigor enables me to be very productive conquering projects procrastinated during the heat of summer. The off season is my time of year to maintain the house. Cooking, vacuuming and general cleaning become Jack's duties as my wife, a teacher and private reading tutor, adapts to her longer days. A daily workout has become

habit and when it snows I shovel. Nope, I do not lack energy. And as principal winter chef I tend to lean toward meats, vegetables and gravy laden, healthy comfort foods.

The bluesy malady I suffer probably won't be improved through the use of bright light therapy, medication, ionized-air administration, cognitive-behavioral therapy and carefully timed supplementation of the hormone melatonin. Although I do like a few minutes under the tanning lamp should my budget permit a trip to a southern local! In truth, I don't believe I suffer from SADs. Rather, I think I miss the long hours, heat and prospects of summer. Yes, summer. Complete with a full crew to employ, turf management challenges to address and a busy workload.

In short, my heart aches during the off season because I miss my job as a golf course manager. Since 1976 I have lived my dream and each fall I remiss the fact that spring is so far away. The people I work with are true gems. The diverse turf management situations upon which I apply my education are always challenging me. The environment of growth, rejuvenation, stress and recovery excites me to my core. The pressure of growing grass on the edge and producing a product in which my patrons take great pride keeps me from becoming distracted or complacent. My life is most enjoyable when I am applying my trade.

During the chill of winter my calling is shouting, yet I can't do anything about it. Tiny tufts of sampled turf do nothing for my soul no

matter how "green" they may smell. A holdover Robin darting from beneath the cover of a spruce tree is just a tease.

This winter I will harshly kick my share of fenderbergs, those crusty conglomerations of frozen snow and salt/sand that grow upon the under carriage of cars and trucks from November through March. Pondering unhappily the distinct shapes of snowflakes I will steep in my hot tub. Shuddering spastically I will twitch from the distinct noise of snow across ice under my rubber soled sorrel boots. And my breath will catch and stutter as I draw deep the frosty dry sub-zero air.

Through it all, in the depths of my mildly depressed mind, I will reminisce the joy of summers past and yearn for the warmth of the next season. These blossoming thoughts will help brighten my soul as I suffer in the growing darkness.