



In Bounds

by Jack MacKenzie CGCS

Recently my wife and I returned from an extended trip out of

the country to Italy. Long in planning and a dream of Kim's we celebrated our marriage, our health and the good fortune we have been blessed with. An excursion of a lifetime, our relationship is stronger today than it has ever been before.

We saw the sites, ate the food, embraced the culture and were surprised and pleased by all of the nuances of Italian life...well, maybe not all! In our country we are spoiled with amenities to the point that we often take them for granted. Especially when it comes to our biological needs: to be more specific our rest rooms.

Almost all of the public facilities and many of the private ones in Italy are very, very basic. Bluntly put, they are glorified holes with a porcelain

surround. Functional, yet certainly primitive by our American standards, the experience of logistical attack can be perplexing for the first time user especially if you may be 'backed up' after twelve hours in flight. I will say no more.

One observation I must make quite clear...95 percent of the rest rooms I utilized, both inside and out, were exceptional in their maintenance, cleanliness and presentation. The Italians take pride in their function amenities and it quite honestly made each experience better because of the attention to details they place upon the 'basics'. Many of the depositories were "pay to poop" so there were monies available to support the cause! I have new appreciation for five-star facilities.

How are you doing with your golf course biffy with its' amenities? Are they too five star quality year around? Are your Johnny's clean and bathrooms buffed? (continued on page 29)

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How do they smell? Is the paper soft enough? Warm, water or sanitizer? Beyond your bathrooms how about the bunker rakes, cups, ball washers and garbage cans. Are they too beyond reproach? Perhaps on opening day, but what about in late August?

Statistically the average golf course allocates approximately 1.5 percent of the annual operating budget (not including water consumption) upon their 'basic' amenities and accessories. Wow, wow... no really...WOW, that isn't a whole lot for a peripheral, yet very personal part of the game that the players take for granted.

Sure one splintered handle upon the course isn't going to spoil a round but how about three or four, a chipped ball washer, missing tee towels or sun faded flags. Of course they don't have a lot to do with the basics of golf, but their presentation will effect your players perception of your track and in the long run their expectations.

When the course is great, the weather fine and scores at least average a small blemish in the total picture may be overlooked, or even one or two. However, at the end of the summer when everything and everyone is getting a bit weathered and tired even the littlest of things

will shout catastrophic, cataclysmic and abhorrent blasphemies about your management style and or lack there of.

At courses I have worked upon we usually spent one quarter of the national average each year to keep the amenities in par with player expectations. By the end of the year we had fewer rakes than when we started, slightly bleached flags and towels, a couple of chips in the ball washers and spotty cups. Was the experience as good on the last day of the season as it was on April first? Were expectations diminished through out the round as imperfections added up?

Sure excuses can be made for anything and everything including simple wear and tear. But at what price...surely 1.5 percent is a minimal investment in enhancing player appreciation...even if they don't notice it directly. Their subconscious perceptions will however and the difference may impact their desire to play.

One thing is for certain...the population of Italy and all the tourists who visit wouldn't tolerate ill kept and non-functioning bathroom amenities. And I am darn glad of it! In life if the basics are well kept everything seems to work out in the end.