

Five Steps to Better Outings

by Rhys Arthur, Indian Spring Country Club

Golf Outings are a major source of revenue for many courses. Often they are initiated to ward off financial ills, supplement operational expenses, or help generate capital. But, when outings are not executed properly, they can also be a source of major headaches for your Club, your staff, and your course.

Making an Outing run like clockwork is not as hard as you might think. There are several concepts you can incorporate into your management program that can make your outings run easily, and more successful, for everyone.

Here are five steps to better Outings:

<PLANNING> As with any venture you engage in, proper planning almost always prevents poor performance. It is critical that you know what will occur on each and every Outing day. Meeting with you Club management early in the year is important in order to select dates for Outings that don't interfere with regular play, or your maintenance practices. Early planning is your opportunity to block out dates for the work that you need to accomplish, before those dates are sold or reserved.

Proper planning should provide you with the time of day you are expected to have the course ready. Knowing the size of the field, types of players, and other obligations that you will have to meet should be clearly spelled out in advance. This allows you to organize your crew, have the necessary equipment ready, maintenance completed, and the course prepared.

By maintaining a good rapport, and insisting on regular meetings with your golf professional and club management, you can develop a plan to easily accomplish what needs to be done.

<ORGANIZATION> Organization on the day of the event is second only to proper advanced planning. Whenever you can, meet with the Tournament Chairman before the event. More often than not, these Tournament Chairmen are volunteers, and novices in running large organized events. They often don't have the expertise to pull a large event off, and they need your profes-

sional help to make it a success. Trust me, they will appreciate you for helping them.

Find out in advance what he or she needs to have done on that particular day. Typically, these Outings have corporate sponsors. Find out what will have to be done to handle their signs, and other obligations to those sponsors.

Will there be special events on any of the holes? What is the format for play? What types of players are in the group, and how should the course be set up to get them through the course in reasonable time, and have fun.

Where do the hole-in-one cars go, who will place them on the course, who keeps the keys, and when will they arrive? Will there be volunteers located on the course, and how will they get to their positions before and after the event? Will there be food stations, tents, beverage carts, or the need for extra trash cans? You may think that these things are unimportant, but these are the types of things that always go wrong at the worst possible moment. It pays to consider them and take care of them well in advance.

<PREPARATION> Preparing for Outings does not have to be a headache. Usually, if you know in advance exactly what you need to accomplish, you can do it by simply rearranging your regular schedule. Consider these concepts:

Evening crews: To avoid that morning panic of trying to get everything done early in the morning, try planning an evening crew prior to the event. Tasks such as mowing fairways, tees, spraying, changing cups can all be done the night before with a modest staff, placing one of your assistants or foreman in charge. You may find that your crew actually enjoys the change in pace, and the opportunity to work in the cooler evenings. The bonus here is not having to complete these tasks with a full field on the course the following day.

Split Crews: Schedule your staff in advance, and consider bringing a few members in earlier to hand water, or to get a head start with the greensmowers if it is an early shotgun. Even simple things such as parking your equipment in the proper order the night before can go a long way in making the day of the event go much easier.

<COMMUNICATION> Keep the lines of communication open during the event. Per-

haps even giving the organizer of the event one of your spare two-way radios can keep things under control. Cart violations, rowdy groups, injuries, or even approaching storms demand that you keep abreast of what's going on.

Be a Team Player and don't forget to communicate with the Clubhouse during the event. Help them whenever you can by keeping them advised of the pace of the group, so they can organize banquet preparation following golf.

<FOLLOW-THROUGH> Be thorough on your follow-through! Plan on having a crew member stay after the event for clean-up. Part of having a successful Outing, is having the course cleaned-up promptly for the regular play that will follow.

Develop a plan for getting hole-in-one cars, volunteers, and the players off the course, especially if there is a possibility of a thunderstorm. Finally, set aside some time to check in with the Tournament Chairman and make sure that everything went well, and as anticipated. After all, running outings is big business. Every business wants repeat customers, and showing your dedication towards running a good golf course operation bodes well for both your club, and the professional image of Golf Course Superintendents.

Really, running successful Outings is truly rewarding when done right. You can easily develop a sense of pride when you help a group raise money for a worthy charity, or simply by showcasing your course to their guests, and potential members for your Club.

Take a little time and enjoy the outing yourself. You work hard to prepare your course for the event, and you will find that you will enjoy these Outings much more if you take a little time and enjoy them yourself. Often you may find a few celebrities, get a few autographs, or even watch one of your crew members eat a dozen hotdogs!

Simply, after a bit of practice, and making well managed Outings your personal goal, you will find that they are actually easy, enjoyable, and they don't have to be a major headache. And when you are armed with a better attitude and outlook about outings, everybody wins.