

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SUMMER!

As I'm sure you will remember I mentioned that we in the south east were having a tough time during the spring with little or no rain. Well the rain came and as I'm sure those flooded in the North and the Midlands will be more than aware, it has forgotten to stop during June and it's another record-breaking month with the wettest months rain for over 100 years.

The impact of either dry or too wet weather conditions does in fact have a major impact on day to day business at the golf club with the financial losses taking their toll on everyone's income stream. This could have a knock on effect on all investment lines available to us entrusted to maintain and develop our own golf courses during the coming years. The first to react to these conditions will, of course, be the more commercial developments among us, dependent on high ratio green fee business for peak cash flow to sustain their business both in the short and long term at this time of year.

There seems to be a trend here in the UK for reducing amounts of members associating to a club and, in fact, taking their normal membership fees and spending them more on green fees during the course of the year at many different venues rather than commit to any one club. So it's not that the business is being totally removed from the members clubs it's just being moved around a wee bit more today than in the past. Frankly I'm not sure if this is a trend, fad or fashion, but this I am sure of, it will have an impact of major proportions in the future of golf over the coming years or so.

These decisions made by the golfing public are being made for the following reasons in my opinion. Firstly the time taken to play golf is becoming too long and socially unacceptable to the family unit, then mix in the fact that most venues except that very few have made golf more available to the green fee player more now than ever before in our history. The cost of membership with all its associated costs is becoming prohibitive and coupled with less disposable income for most people, it is



becoming unfashionable to commit to such a large outgoing every year. All of this linked to the fact that the market is flush with golfing venues after the golfing boom of the late 80s and early 90s, it's no wonder that things will become even tighter to secure a sustainable and sound business into the future at the golf club.

So when you're General Manager and the club Committee ask you to be careful with the cash, they do ask for a reason and furnished with the full receipts of the business have sometimes a valued argument for controlling the costs of the operation. It's a fact that a lost or cancelled tee time can never be recovered and will have an effect on how we ply our trade day to day with a reduction in available cash to spend on the course. So another myth blown out of the water that a cancelled day or tee time is a good thing and will give the course a rest, is, I'm afraid, a luxury we can no longer afford in golf.

"So what's your point, Billy?" You might be asking. Well it's really quiet simple, if we are to survive the shake out of change and be successful in the coming years we will have to react to market forces and be sufficiently malleable to change. Stop being reactive and become more pro active about the future and become involved at greenkeeper level with the holistic decisions made at your golf club. They can't do it without us on board and pulling in the same direction. You all have a contribution to make to the well being of the future at your club. Another thing you should know is that nothing stays the same forever and, with or without you, change will take place and if you mistakenly assume that your business is secure then you might be in for a shock over the coming years, as times are a changing.

Now on a lighter note. The new smoking legislation has now become law and, as a confirmed few or so fags a day man, I have a slant on how things are in Australia, as witnessed during a trip I had there last year. Because they have put a whole new interpretation on no smoking on a golf course debate and they sell food and beverages on the course, the law in Australia requires that the control of this smelly and unpopular activity has to be extended to the course as well as all buildings. Now it seems there is a grey area on how this should be applied and therefore each club has made up their own rules for how the law would be interpreted. The club I had the pleasure to play said that you were not allowed to smoke on the tee, fairway, in a bunker or on the green. However, you could smoke to your heart's content in the rough, what a result, the perfect rule to suit my game they must have had me in mind when they thought up that corker.

Billy McMillan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. McMillan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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