

"KEEPING WISCONSIN GOLFERS HAPPY"

The title, "Keeping Wisconsin Golfers Happy", covers a large field. We are constantly trying, but do not always succeed. To obtain any degree of success we must analyze our membership - what they expect and what they desire to obtain from their golf. Most golfers play not only for the sport but to relax and to relieve the nerve strain and tension of the modern business world. To make them happy, we must make our golf courses a retreat with a quiet, restful atmosphere with the feeling of escape from the fast moving restless world.

In order to obtain this atmosphere we must incorporate all of the beauty possible without adding hazards for the golfer. Let us start with the main entrance. It should always be neat and attractive. The first impression made by members - old and new -, guest and even non-members who pass by is of the greatest importance. The Milwaukee Country Club has a split rail fence along the main drive which is a quarter mile long and lined with trees. It gives one the feeling of restfulness and retreat from that busy world. Brynwood Country Club's club house is setting on top of a hill with a tree lined drive and attractive flower beds on the side of a hill facing you as you approach the club house. At my home course, North Hills Country Club, the club house is fairly close to the highway. We have landscaped the entrance with flower beds on either side and a shrub screen to hide the club house from direct views of the highway. Along the entrance drive we have flowering trees; evergreens and flowers make up the foundation planting for the club house. Across the drive from the main entrance to the club house we have a round flower bed of red florabunda roses with two toned petunias and sweet alyssum as a double border.

Next in line is adequate parking facilities. It is a source of annoyance to go to your private club and then have to look for a parking space. To keep members happy you must have parking facilities close to the locker room.

Next let us consider the view over the golf course from the inside of the club house, — dining room, grill, or any other part of the club that overlook the grounds. Every possible effort must be made to keep this area well groomed, and attractive. There must be careful care taken in the placement of trees, the bold clean look of sand traps, the cutting pattern that will intrance the green of the grass, and where space permits, attractive flower beds between the club house and the playing area. By all means avoid a cluttered look. Try to establish a look of spaciousness.

The practice putting green is the next point for our consideration. This is possibly the most abused piece of turf on the golf course. Most of us at one time or another have heard a golfer on the practice green remark: "I hope that the greens on the course are in better shape than this". Extra effort must be put forth to keep this green in just as good shape as those on the course.

Now we come to the all important golf course — the main reason that members have joined the club. Today's golfers want tees in almost putting green shape. They must be large with a grass that can be foured for a quick recovery from damage. They require the care of a putting green, almost the same amount of fertilizer, and slightly less water so that they are firm, and cut so that a ball on a tee will stand out.

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The cut and care of fairways depends on the type of grass and the water available. But any grass will respond and pay dividends in dense, better colored turf from an adequate fertilizing program. The placement of sand traps is very important. The fairway traps should be located so that they define the playing route, and are a challenge to a good golfer who wishes to cut the corner yet far out enough so that a high handicapped, short hitter is not constantly visiting them. They must be maintained with a layer of loose sand, free of weeds and raked not only to remove the foot-prints but to keep the sand loose and smooth.

The greens are where half of the strokes of a good golfer are used. This then illustrates their importance in keeping golfers happy. Just because your neighbor cuts his grass at 3/16 of an inch doesn't mean you can. Your greens may be more rolling, have stronger slopes, or a different type of grass. At 3/16 your greens may become slippery and ball impossible to control. Therefore you must cut higher and do more brushing and verticle cutting to avoid the grain. Don't blindly follow a successful neighbor program.

The landscaping and placement of trees is of vital importance. They must be placed to outline the play, penalized wild shots, beautify the grounds and still leave air drainage. The invasion of Dutch Elm disease has pointed out to us the importance of a wide variety of trees so that our inventory of trees will not be depleted too greatly by any one disease. Variety also enhances the beauty of the course.

Other things we have done to keep golfers happy is to schedule work to avoid play. Each year it is becoming more difficult but improvement in equipment has helped. The golf cart has added to our work and has increased the difficulty in keeping golfers happy. The cart user feels that wear spots and compaction

made by carts has little effect on golf or turf. The non-users feel that it is an impossible shot when his ball is on a piece of turf that is compacted by cart traffic and that cart tracks spoil the appearance of the entire course. In an effort to make both sides happy we have gone into extensive airification and fertilization of any area where cart traffic is heavy and have used added care in routing golf carts both by slight structural changes on the course and route signs where necessary. Rope and stake barriers around wet spots to keep carts running under adverse conditions, and have been quite successful in preventing wear spots even tho 22 rental carts made over 2700 rounds and 15 owner carts made about 1000 rounds at North Hills from May thru October.

This past summer at North Hills we employed a golf ranger to help locate balls on the wooded holes and other little things to help prevent the holding up of play. He also patrols the grounds cutting down the amount of trespassing and vandalism and has contributed to making golfers happy.

If we keep our courses well groomed, we have added to the natural beauty of our golf grounds, been diplomatic in our relations with the members, been progressive in our turf program, been modern in our work, we can safely say that we have kept some of the golfers happy all of the time and all of the golfers happy some of the time. In dealing with humans we know that it is impossible to keep all of the people happy all of the time.

This talk given by Charlie Shiley, Superintendent, Northhills Country Club, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at Olympia Fields Annual Fall Turf Clinic.



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