

## STAND YOUR GROUND

In the northern states, where nearly 75% of the nation's golf courses are located, the arrival of the Ides of March annually triggers the homing instinct in millions of winter-weary and action-eager golfers who spill out on the fairways like hordes of lemmings bent on self-destruction. However, because the turf is either still frozen or soggy, it is the golf courses that suffer the immediate effects of this annual invasion — and the golfers get off with nothing worse than bruised egos.

Unfortunately, early season damage to golf turf is not easily or inexpensively remedied and the same golfers who cannot wait to tread the then vulnerable turf are the most critical of mid-season dead spots in the fairways and indentations in the putting surfaces. Repairs to such damage are not only costly but often result in making important areas of the golf course unplayable to the membership when traffic is heavy.

Contrary to the belief of many golfers, one of the most unpleasant responsibilities of the professional golf course superintendent is to recommend—or to order—the closing of the golf course to play when conditions are such that severe damage to the turf will result if play is not discontinued.

The truly professional superintendent will recognize this responsibility and act upon it, realizing that, otherwise even greater unpleasantness will accrue to him, when mid-season grumbling about course conditions begins. The permissive superintendent, taking the attitude "it's their golf course, let them kill it if they want to," is not only ducking his basic responsibility to protect the course—even from the membership, if necessary—but will soon be looking for another job.

The club that does not charge its golf course superintendent with the responsibility—and the authority—to close the golf course to play when such action is warranted is short-changing the membership by not allowing the superintendent to do his job. At such clubs the hapless superintendent usually winds up the fall guy for irresponsible decisions by a submissive board of directors.

However, the ultimate responsibility for the protection of the golf course lies with you, the golfing member. An efficient superintendent and a conscientious board of directors can only set rules. You must abide by them if the club is to benefit. Even more, it's not enough for you as an individual to toe the mark, you must back up your board and your superintendent by insisting that your fellow members observe the rules.

If your course is closed to play anytime this spring, fight the urge to sneak out for an early round of golf that will probably cost you more than a few makeable putts in May or June. You'll be glad you did! (Why not use the practice range?) — **Country Club Golfer**

By Don Rossi, Executive Director, NGF

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