

Putting It All in Perspective

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The snow is melting, and the forecast is filled with warmer temperatures. The mechanic is putting the finishing touches on the last few pieces of equipment and wants to know when you're going to aerify. Ernesto is convinced the only thing he hasn't painted is Javier. He can't wait to get outside. As the superintendent, you've spent the last three (five?) months inside at your computer. You have tweaked the fertilizer program, budgeted for the latest biological cure-all, seen things you shouldn't on the Internet and rewritten your employee manual. It appears

that everything is in place for the upcoming season.

Then it happens; you've been left alone for months, but

*When are
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now the phone starts ringing. When are the greens going to be open? Are the greens going to be

faster this year? I played in Florida all winter, and the greens were perfect! Why don't we grow that kind of grass here? The first time it hits 50°, the players want a golf cart. Or maybe you're not as ready for the season as you would like to be. Perhaps you and the staff are scrambling around trying to do a month of work in ten days. Your fuse gets short, and you realize that winter is never long enough.

Did you take the time to get yourself reconditioned this winter? Are the same old people and the same old problems going to get under your skin again this season? I'm not talking about a vacation. We all take those. The point is, did you

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bring your same self back from wherever it is you went? It's at this point that most of us would like to roll our eyes, turn the page and read something else.

Let's be realistic. None of us are perfect, but Mrs. Evans always gripes about the tee positions and wants to know what you're spraying. At some point, we would be silly to expect anything different from her. I think as a group, we are a pretty relaxed bunch. However, there are several guys who always seem to be smiling, helpful, never complaining and making the best of what Mother Nature deals us. This sort of thing doesn't interest everyone, but I wonder what makes them tick. I had to disqualify the guys who told me

they kept their sanity by kicking the dog or knocking the top off of a 12-pack every

However, there are several guys who always seem to be smiling, helpful, never complaining and making the best of what Mother Nature deals us.

night. The following veteran superintendents had thoughts to offer:

Les Rutan from Beverly Country Club hinted the laid-

back attitude that he might project may be laziness or fatigue in disguise. He feels his strong family ties help keep things in perspective. For several years, he has coached his children's basketball and softball teams and admitted that one of his prize possessions is a softball signed by a group of 9-year-old kids he recently coached. He also mentioned that any success as a superintendent or as a parent can be attributed to his wife.

As if the activities of four children didn't keep him busy enough, Les also has been very involved with the Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents and with his Parish Men's Club. While at work, Les suggested that his style of management was not one of ruling with an "iron fist." He has found that compliments

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and encouragement carry more weight than constantly yelling and carrying on.

Dennis Wilson at Sunset Ridge Country Club told me it was easy to be in a good mood. When he looks at where he came from and where he is today, it is hard not to smile. He is very grateful for the opportunities this profession has given him. He recalls attending meetings with his uncle Domenic Grotti and being in awe of some of the legendary superintendents from our area. However, he reminded me that there are no "gods," that we are all human beings and that being down to earth, friendly and helpful to one another is very important. He also added that it doesn't

hurt to remember that Mother Nature can kick our butt whenever she likes.

Finally, I spoke with **Peter Leuzinger** from the Ivanhoe Club. He stressed how important attitude is and that it boils down to being 10 percent of what happened and 90 percent of how you reacted. (Not something he thought of, but a formula someone much more famous than himself came up with.) Over the years, a smile and a positive attitude have produced happy endings to many crazy situations for Pete. He also maintained that it is much better to be a "giver than a taker" and that it is fun to do just that. Helping others can do a great deal for your self esteem. Additionally, he stressed how important it is to want to get along with others. We

need allies, and not working at building a positive relationship with our golf professional and general manager can only hurt the superintendent.

In closing, I hope these healthy perspectives offer everyone something to think about in the months ahead. Are we doing everything we can to be patient with that guy on the crew who is slow to catch on? We can effectively do our jobs without yelling at the next guest who drives too close to the green. If all else fails, just smile the next time Mrs. Evans comes looking for you because she had an upset stomach Thursday, and it's probably from whatever you sprayed on Monday. ■

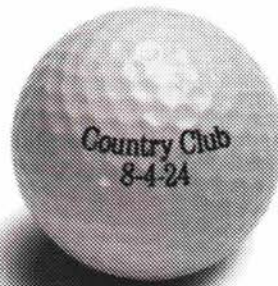
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