



Putting 2001 In Our Rearview Mirrors

As I walked around the show floor during the recent NCTE, I noticed a recurring theme. Most of us are very happy to see 2001 end.

I am sure many of you have noticed that our seasons are getting longer. Many courses open in mid-March and are closing in December or staying open all year . . . Early openings and/or late closings put a strain on budgets.

In my eyes, 2001 was a year that just would not end soon enough. Our country was attacked, changing forever the way we live our lives. A year ago, who would have thought opening your mail could be life-threatening? We now are a little more apprehensive about flying and pay attention to who is on the plane with us. The nation's economy has taken a downward turn, which has affected our jobs and families. It amazes me how quickly our lives have changed.

The WEATHER!!! 2001 was not a great weather year. The spring was wet and cold. Summer had its moments . . . hot, dry spells followed by perfect conditions and very spotty rainfall. Then came the fall. For those of us who had fall projects, the past autumn's weather was a major pain in the butt. The one thing you could count on was a two- or three-inch rain every couple of days to make things so wet that it was impossible to work on your project for a week. The only saving grace was late October and November. For those of us on the public side, there is nothing better than a few 60-degree weekends in November to help bail out what could have been a dismal year, revenue-wise. As superintendents, we all know we cannot control the weather. I wonder if the golfers who play our courses know that.

Speaking of golfers, their expectations are increasing. This is not breaking news in 2001, however, the issue does seem to be coming to the forefront. I am sure many of you have noticed that our seasons are getting longer. Many courses open in mid-March and are closing in December or staying open all year. During our season of operation, players expect perfect conditions regardless of the time of year. Early openings and/or late closings put a strain on budgets. The fact is, there are going to be those times when because of weather, budget limitations or whatever, perfect playing conditions are not achievable. Superintendents need to continue to educate players and superiors about how much weather and budget limitations affect course conditions. Players have the right to have great expectations about the courses they play on, but they must also have realistic ones.

The holiday season has come and gone. I hope everyone had time to spend with family and friends. I was lucky enough to take time off and do those little things with my family that I don't get to do during the season. There is nothing better than attending a preschool holiday sing or driving kids to school. I felt like Michael Keaton in *Mr. Mom*. How does my wife do this everyday?

Above all, remember this: Take some time this winter and recharge your batteries so you will be strong enough to face the challenges of 2002.

