

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Luke Cella, *Publisher*



Give Golf

I've had many, many conversations this past year centered on the future of golf. The common theme is that golf will be different when the economy strengthens. Speculations include: a few courses closing their doors, permanent staff reductions, changes in job descriptions, less inputs, lower maintenance standards, and fewer golfers to share.

Every golf course operation has made changes to its business plan. Some began making changes ten years ago, while others have undergone some more knee-jerk and seemingly drastic reactions in the past 24 months. The golf maintenance side seems to have been hit hardest by these reductions, it is the largest expense in any golf operation. Superintendents are very resourceful and have found many ways to do more with less and provide exceptional conditions. How long can we operate in this fashion? One of two things will happen: resources will become available or maintenance standards and conditions will be lowered.

Over the past months, I've listened to many. "Rounds are up, but revenues are down." "We had a great September and November, one of the best." "October sucked!" "Our outcome is still heavily tied to weather." Of all these statements, people are still playing golf and that is good.

Golf is a business and we are vested in it. The business model we play a role in is dependent upon our owner(s) or operators. Every situation is different. We have scrutinized our operations, we have changed our way of thinking, and we have evaluated our business plan and moved forward. While we will never be able to separate ourselves from the business side of golf, we need to start to see it as a game again.

Long before golf was a business, it was a game. We can trace its evolution to its simplest form, a competition among friends that was enjoyable and provided opportunities for people to spend time with each other. We know the great qualities of our game; self-measure and score, exercise, experiencing nature, etc – but I think we often forget why others and we play. It is a very enjoyable game that continually changes. It provides an ever-present challenge to all, no matter skill, level, or passion. In the months that lay ahead, I ask two things of you: look at golf as a game again and encourage one young person to play.

Give golf. Formal golf starter programs are great, but take a moment to look around and encourage those that have already begun the game. We see kids playing on our courses and don't think much about it; however, they are the future of golf. Simple comments such as "Nice shot," "Hey, I found these balls, I'll bet you can use them," or "You really have a nice swing, keep working on it," can go a long way with those starting out. You can make a large difference.

Our profession is centered on a game, a game that became a business. Separate yourself from the business for a moment and see the game again. It will make a bigger difference than you think. **-OC**



Bayer Environmental Science

John Turner
Sr. Sales Specialist - Golf

Tel: 630-443-7807
Fax: 630-443-7839
Mobile: 630-215-6110
john.turner@bayercropscience.com



Randy H. Lusher

Sr. Sales Specialist II
BASF Turf & Ornamental

5430 Washington Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515
Telephone (630) 810-1832
Voice Mail (800) 843-1611 Box # 6649
Cell (630) 235-0104
Fax (630) 810-9579
E-Mail: randy.lusher@basf.com