



# Meat and Potatoes Stew at the Links

*What are the real meat and potatoes at your facility? The meats at my facility are the golfers. Now if you like meat as much as I do, then you do whatever it takes to get it. How many superintendents took advantage of the past two mild summers we had to create unusually fast conditions?*

I really never hear my golfers say, "Rick the greens are too fast today." What I do hear is fellow superintendents say, "are you crazy how many times last week did you double cut and roll." During these tough economic times I want to keep my golfers happy and playing at my facility.

My situation is a little different from some, because we cater to many low handicappers. Today most of my members are members at other facilities, as well. So, it's important to try to set ourselves apart from other facilities. We want our members to choose our facility out of the two or three clubs they belong to and to bring their guests here. With the mild weather we had over the past two summers, creating optimal playing conditions was not very risky. So, if I can double cut and roll four or five times a week with my old sixty-plus percent *Poa annua* greens, why are others with new greens and grasses not doing the same? Well, most likely, because they aren't crazy. I think that I should thank all of you for not being crazy, because while you're not being crazy, we've stepped up the fine touches and maintained our rounds of golf for the past three years.

O.K., enough of the blah, blah, blah. The point I'm trying to make is, what are you doing to keep your golf rounds up at your facility? In my opinion, the present economy calls for a decrease in spending, but an increase in detail. How can I spend less but do more? By using the best asset we have at our facilities— staff. Delay any large projects; repaint and rebuild instead of buying new equipment. Perhaps set up an every-other-year equipment purchasing program.

I believe the last thing we should cut is staff. Staff is, in my opinion, the potatoes of the meat and potatoes. Staff is the fulfilling part of the meat and potatoes. They are the individuals that get the job done. One of my favorite sayings comes from Al Fierst. He always said, "when something needs to be completed, call the 'movers and the shakers,' the grounds crew."

I sat down with my crew and talked about the importance of keeping golfer rounds up. What we needed to do to keep golfers happy and guest rounds coming. One of those things was keeping green speeds up on these old *Poa annua* greens. We set a plan in place, and everyone has chipped in to make it work for the past three years. The crew is paying more attention to details, adjusting hours, and taking real pride in the product they are producing. We are not working any more hours than if it was a warm summer requiring a little hand watering (which is figured into the labor budget).

What has happened is that we have had the same rounds played, both guest and member rounds, over the past three years. This has put the club in position to continue to employ staff during this economic down time.

On a final note, I should point out how lucky I am to have two Assistant Superintendents, Alonso Esquivel (32years) and Paul Stoffel (15 years), who are truly dedicated to our club. The majority of the crew has been with me for 5 to 30 years. They are eager to perform, because they realize how well the members at our club support us.

So instead of taking advantage of a mild summer by leaving early or laying off an employee, try taking that extra step when conditions are right. **-OC**