

MIDWEST BREEZES

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The Snapshot

In the customer service industry the common expression is: “you never get a second chance to make a first impression”. Golf courses are no different; we are in the service industry. People come out to play our courses and for better or worse, the course they play that day is the impression they have for the rest of the season and sometimes longer. At times people are playing our course for a tournament, an outing or just a “road trip”. People may play our courses one time the entire year and that is the snapshot they take of the golf course. Because “word of mouth” is still one of the most powerful forms of advertising the snapshot matters. Today expectations are high when it comes to golf courses.

As turf professionals, we know conditions vary day-to-day, month to month. Physiologically, the plant is different in the summer than it is in the fall. At the same daily mowing height, the greens may be fast or slow depending on the weather. It might be sunny and wet or it could be dry and cool. Maintenance tasks vary day to day. You might have top-dressed that day, aerified tees or not mowed certain areas. You might not have changed the cups, raked bunkers or maybe not string trimmed around some of the details. It might be a Monday or a Friday. The staffing levels may be different day to day and the tasks may vary from day to day. In this era of budget constraints, people are trying to do more with less. How often have you heard from golfers that they just want consistency? Golf is being played outdoors on “real” grass and inconsistency is the rule when dealing with all things natural. It’s a tough “sell”.

As we all know in our day to day golf maintenance tasks everything we do is a process. There is staffing, training, equipment operations and agronomics that all blend together as part of the process. It’s not like an “I Dream of Jeannie” or a “Bewitched” episode where we just magically blink our eyes and the golf course looks like Augusta National during the Masters. We have to complete the tasks one hole at a time, starting at O:dark:30. It takes a few hours just to complete the daily basic morning set up tasks of changing cups, mowing greens, moving tee markers and other specialized mowing areas. To the average golfer with the 8:00 tee time all he/she sees is a finished product. They take a snapshot of that golf course on that particular day, at that particular time.

This was a difficult growing season, one of the toughest ever. Although the fall was dry, most courses had good recovery but the memories of poor turf conditions will linger. All we can do is our best to attempt to communicate what is happening with our turf and the limitations we all have with the nuances of each particular golf course. Each player who plays our courses takes a snapshot memory of their experience. Perfection is an illusion. Hopefully the pendulum will swing back to the days of yore when people were just glad to be out on the course having fun, enjoying the great outdoors and the camaraderie the game lends itself to. Until then, all we can do is try to be picture perfect. **-OC**