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How Hard Can it Be?

“A league of Their Own” is a 1992 film starring Geena Davis and Tom Hanks. The film tells the story of a World War II era women’s baseball league that was formed to keep public interest alive in baseball during the war. This is not my favorite film of all time. Indeed it might not crack the top 100.

However, near the end of the film Tom Hanks’ character provides a brief, astonishing moment of clarity that provided the inspiration for this column.

Geena Davis’ character’s husband (Bill Pullman aka “Lone Star”) has returned, injured, from the war. The road, the competition and the game have become frustrating for Davis. She longs for a return to her native Oregon and the simpler life that awaits her there. In despair, fighting back tears, she explains to Hanks, “It just got too hard.”

Hanks is dissatisfied with this and explains in no uncertain terms, “It’s supposed to be hard. If it wasn’t hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great.” I am reminded of these words when things just aren’t going my way at work, at home or elsewhere in my life.

As Golf Course Superintendents we are presented, almost daily, with a wide variety of challenges. We work in an ever changing, living, breathing, dynamic environment. Some of these hurdles include the weather, our customers, stakeholders, owners, members, co-workers, industry support, equipment, and infrastructure. There is quite literally a whole world out there that has the ability to screw up your day. That’s what I love about my job.

I like to figure it out. If I can’t figure it out on my own, I ask the people I work with. If they can’t figure it out I ask the people I work for. I am the first to admit that I don’t know everything. I don’t have all the answers. The answers are out there.

I have always felt that control is an illusion. All things being equal the world will behave as it damn well pleases. I can’t control any of the challenges that are beyond the scope of my influence. I can influence our response to those challenges. I can figure it out. I take the idea ‘the hard is what makes it great’ and apply it to my job. Finding those answers, solving problems, making improvements and preventing mistakes is what I enjoy most about my job.

The challenges that we face at work are not hardships, only challenges. Talk to any family that has lost a loved one, or has family serving in the military, or who has lost their home in a tornado and they can speak about hardship. In the end, golf is a game. The people we work for are supposed to enjoy themselves. I feel strongly that we can enjoy ourselves at work, too. We are only afforded so many years in the sun. Why not make the most of ‘the hard’ part of it? After all, the hard is what makes it great. @

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The best known line from the movie “There’s no crying in baseball” is followed by the funniest line of the whole movie - check it out on YouTube.