

*A fictitious letter to an imaginary golfer from an average superintendent*

Dear Member,

The other day you were complaining to me about the condition of the golf course. You said our fairways were hard and weren't as green or as beautifully manicured as Bay Hill or the TPC that you saw on television. You're right, of course. Anyone can see it. But do you understand why?

Don't you understand that those courses get revenue from television that they use to insure they are green and beautiful for the tournament? Our maintenance budget was cut this year to avoid raising dues to the members.

As I recall the emphasis was on redecorating the clubhouse. It does look gorgeous doesn't it?

Do you know that these courses spend tens of thousands of dollars to oversee the courses so you can see those pretty stripes and checkerboard patterns from the blimp? Authorize me to spend \$40,000 to \$50,000 on overseeding and extra fertilizer and I can give you stripes too! Even so, we'd be mowing with those eight- and nine-year-old mowers that I've been trying to replace for the past two years.

Unfortunately, the committee keeps slashing my capital equipment budget. If we did oversee the entire golf course, it would also be necessary to upgrade the irrigation system to guarantee that we could water all that ryegrass during late winter warm spells. Those courses on TV have computer controller systems!

Do you also know that those tournament sites often have loaner equipment to help

manicure the course for that week? In some cases it is not unusual for the equipment distributor to supply a technician to help keep the equipment serviced and adjusted. They also have volunteers and extra temporary help for tournament week.

The point is, it takes more than the 12 people we have to produce that kind of result.

Do you know that those courses restrict play and golf cart traffic to keep from wearing out those beautiful striped mowing patterns? We allow carts on the fairways all winter to speed up play and the bermuda turf takes a beating. Bermudagrass doesn't do well in cool weather and those recent 40 degree nights have sapped its reserves and made it look a little ragged. I have tried to get carts restricted to cart paths in the winter, but I get voted down each year. I have applied liquid fertilizer, but we need warm weather for the grass to use it!

I would like to aerify the fairways to soften them up for you. But since we have the member-guest tournament the first week in April, I can't gamble that the fairways will recover in time when we have the possibility of a late season cold snap like this year.

As I write this letter the weather has warmed up and we have had some rain. The fertilizer is kicking in and the turf is greening up. With the turf actively growing we will be able to conduct some of our seasonal cultural practices that will improve the appearance and playing conditions. As usual for this time of year that means we will be verticutting, aerifying, and top dressing. Please don't bring your guests over for a round of golf for a couple of weeks until the turf has recovered.

Just remember, I'm doing the best I can with the resources at hand trying to balance the health, appearance and playability of the turf against the special events calendar and the special interests of each and every member.

Sincerely,

Your Golf Course Superintendent

**To some,  
grass always  
seems greener  
elsewhere**

## Green Side Up



*Joel D. Jackson*

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Editor