

In The Year 2025: What's In Your Future?



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Time flies when you are having fun! Hard to believe that another year has passed and we are into 2005. It seems like not too many years ago I was peering into the crystal ball by reading George Orwell's "1984" or watching "2001-A Space Odyssey." What will the future hold for all of us? Nobody can be certain but I spoke with many experts that have provided me a glimpse of the future.

In the year 2025 there will be a number of pressing issues that will impact all of society and more specifically golf. These items will include:

- Economy
- Environment
- Aging population
- Population growth
- Diversity
- Energy

Baby boomers are now 40-57 years of age. In 2025 they will be 65-82 years old and prime for retirement golf. However, finding a younger work force will be much more difficult.

Life expectancy will increase, creating more seniors than ever before. The population under 45 will decline between 2010 and 2025 as the trend continues toward fewer children in most families.

Cash will be replaced by electronic currency by 2025. "Cash" flow will be as important as staying within budget. Electronic tracking of labor, parts, repairs, etc. will be commonplace. Superintendents will push more paper than ever before with increased reporting required by the employer and the government.

Our golf operations will be impacted by increased government regulations, electricity costs, fuel/oil related costs, the cost of workers' compensation, health insurance and liability insurance.

Golfers will have less expendable income. Many golf courses will struggle with competition and value for a limited number of golfers. Golfer expectations will increase. Golfers will want the best but will question the cost to provide it.

Golf facilities will need to develop strategic plans to compete in the marketplace. Golf courses will compete with other member services for budget dollars. These might include childcare, fitness centers, tennis, etc. Gender-neutral laws will be in full force, eliminating the concept of "spouses" at private clubs.

We will see more nine-hole and practice courses developed. Some people have the time to spend a few hours golfing or practicing, but not the current five to six hours to play a round that we currently experience. Virtual golf will improve and be available nationwide.

We will see the development of artificial surfaces for golf courses.

Water will be the most valuable resource on the planet. Golf will be impacted by the affordability, availability and quality of water. Irrigation systems will operate off of sensors and have the ability to adjust for wet spots and dry spots automatically. All irrigation signals will be wireless. Pump stations may run off of wind or solar power.

Pest control will be accomplished in ways never before thought of. I can envision moni-

toring pest populations with infrared and near infrared photos via satellite. Robotic sprayers would leave the docking bay in the maintenance building and spray at night. The system could be monitored at any remote computer. Precision spraying will allow superintendents to treat only the square footage or acreage necessary to eliminate certain pests vs. blanket spraying.

Equipment of the future will be powered with hydrogen cells, electric or solar power. Mowers will become robotic. Mowing equipment will carry scanners and allow diagnosis of turf areas for weeds, disease, drought, etc. and report back to a central computer... allowing the superintendent to make logical plans for the day, week and year.

Laser mowers will cut the grass uniformly using photons bounced between mirrors. Clippings will be dried immediately. The laser minimizes sites of infection as the tissue is cauterized as it is cut.

New grasses will be the standard. New Kentucky Bluegrasses with heat and drought tolerance will move into the transition zones. Bermudagrass that holds color through the winter will be developed. While I am unsure about "Roundup-resistant" grasses, I do feel that Roundup-tolerant grasses will allow us to spray greens with Roundup at appropriate levels to eliminate Poa annua and yet keep the environmental groups happy.

Government regulations will develop in the areas of fertility. Reporting requirements will be put in place regarding fertility needs and applications. Areas of concerns will be the fate of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

I am sure that we could add to this list as time goes on. However, this might give you a picture of what the future holds. Many challenges lie ahead. Only the strong will survive.

I can't wait!

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