

## Just say 'No' to booze on your course

So, tell me, how did you do with that Budweiser 18-pack — you know, one beer for every hole you played? And did you meet up with that crowd in the right-side woods off the 1st tee — you know, where all the slicers were having a Miller Lite party?

"You listen to PGA, the MSGA [Maine State Golf Association] and other groups, and they talk about the integrity of the game. I wish these organizations would take a stand on alcohol on the golf courses," says Joe Golden, owner of Springbrook Golf Club — no minor golf course, having hosted Maine Opens in the past.

This summer Golden fought successfully in the state Legislature to defeat a law that would have made alcohol sales on golf courses legal in Maine. Most states have these laws, and Golden is not popular right now with many of his colleagues who were pushing for this one.



Mark Leslie  
editor

Those owners saw dollar signs. Golden saw, in bold letters: "Loss of integrity and image." "Here we are, as a group of owners, promoting junior golf and getting young people out on the course. And — what's this — having a beverage cart going from group to group selling beer?" Golden said. "The association is that golf and beer go hand in hand. And that's a bad message. It troubles me greatly. Kids are very impressionable. They know people have beer out there, but it's discreet. But this bill says: 'We endorse golf courses as a place to drink.'

"We are doing a disservice to young people for some added revenue. We already have enough problems with etiquette and rage over slow play. I can see all those things escalating."

Too bad Golden is in a minority. His is a good idea about golf's dominant organizations taking a stand against drinking on golf courses.

And drunkenness isn't even the lone reason to support this ban.

Do beer sales on the course really make money? Answer these questions:

- How much time do those beverage cart visits consume for each foursome? Enough through all the foursomes through the entire day to, say, tee off two or three more foursomes that day? Add those greens fees to your coffers and think about it.

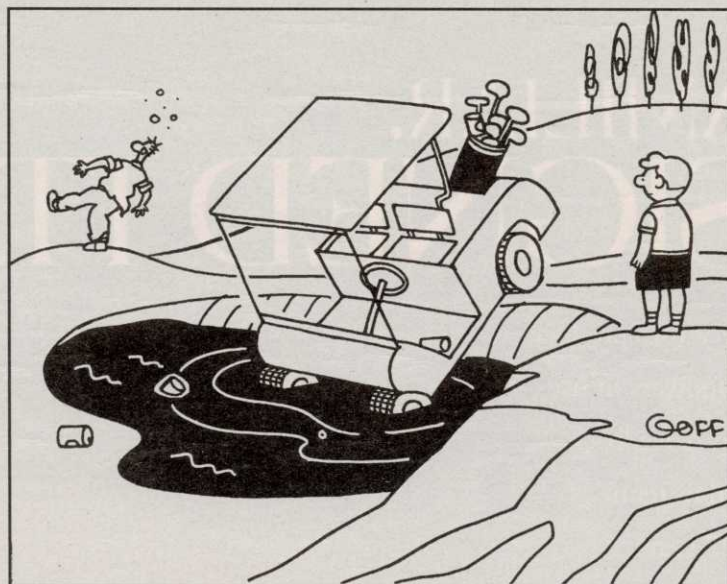
- How about the added risk in "dram-shop" liability claims? The fundamental requirement is that servers exercise care to avoid serving drinks to minors or patrons who have already over-imbibed. Do you trust your college-aged beverage cart driver to have the moxie (or will to resist those big tips) to say, "No"?

- How about your liability insurance itself? Ever check to see how far and fast those premiums would drop if there were no alcohol sales out on your course?

- Do the revenues outstrip the costs? Are sales paying off the payment for the \$8,000-\$10,000 cart, let alone the other expenses?

Frank Jemsek, who with his dad Joe operates four Cog Hill courses and two St. Andrews tracks in Chicago, mentioned an accountant friend who operated golf courses.

"When he had a beverage cart and added it all



"So, this is what golf is all about..."

together — and others confirmed this — the only person who came out ahead was the beverage cart driver," Jemsek said.

The Jemseks have been operating a half-dozen courses for decades and "don't believe in beverage carts," Frank said. Outings at Cog Hill can have soda and water carts. At St. Andrews, more of an "outing" course, alcohol is made available at one or two tees on the course.

"We want to be a place where people 'get a drink,' but we don't want to be a place where they 'drink,'" Frank added. "I believe in the right of people to drink, but we just don't want to have it abused."

The difference, Frank said, is a "fine line. You want to take care of people, not be their guardian angel. But over the years we feel it has been in our and our customers' best interest to serve drinks and serve them in moderation."

Budweiser's television ad promoting 18-packs, he said, is "real dumb."

Vince Alfonso Jr., owner of Kimberling Golf Course in Kimberling City, Mo., and former co-owner of The Rail in Springfield, Ill., said if he could wave a wand and make beer drinking go away on golf courses, he would. And he does sell beer just one can at a time.

But "many see golf as strictly bottom line-driven," Alfonso said. "And bottom line-driven clubs will sell alcohol on their courses because they have apparently proven beverage carts make money."

More likely, perhaps, is that alcohol sales on the course are competition-driven. That is, the

Continued on next page

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Golf work more than a job — an indulgence

To The Editor:

I must thank you for placing my name in such lofty circles with some very dear and old friends in your "Witteveen retired?" article. One likes to see good press and this was, indeed, so kind. In this World of Golf one has an opportunity to meet the finest cross-section of people. Those who know Gordon are richer for it. For those of us that have grown up on a golf course it is more than a job, it is a life's indulgence.

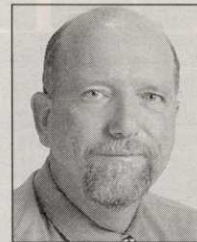
My warmest regards to you and the continued success of GCN, a publication which is perused may times prior to receiving the next issue.

Melvin B. Lucas Jr.  
So. Dartmouth, Mass.

## Making the best of a bad situation

David Oatis is a "When Life Hands You a Lemon, Make Lemonade" kind of guy.

As director of the United States Golf Association Green Section's Northeast Region, Oatis has witnessed the struggles of East Coast superintendents as this summer's prolonged drought has wreaked havoc on the region's courses (see page 1).



Peter Blais  
managing editor

Weaker grasses have died off. The threat of gray leaf spot, which could devastate many courses, looms if things don't improve soon. And courses are fighting to survive under watering restrictions that many states have imposed.

One such state is the Northeast Region's New Jersey, which has ordered that golf course greens and tees may be watered with sprinklers or other mechanical means from 9 p.m. to midnight and 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. only. Syringing is permitted for no more than 10 minutes for each green between noon and 3 p.m.

Superintendents — concerned about their courses, under pressure from owners/members/customers to keep conditions green, and with the cover of darkness and their own irrigation ponds/wells as allies — may be tempted to push these restrictions beyond their limits.

Oatis' advice? DON'T DO IT.

Oatis, along with agronomists Matt Nelson and Jim Skorulski, wrote recently on the USGA's Green Section web page: "There may be some temptation or perhaps even pressure to try to circumvent the intention of the law, but I encourage you all to comply as directed. This is a great opportunity for golf to set a positive example and to demonstrate our commitment to preserving and enhancing the environment. Hopefully, golfers will understand that each course is a representative of the game of golf. If anyone steps over the line, it reflects badly on the entire industry. This is about being good citizens and living up to our responsibilities."

Enough said.

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Here's hoping that Golf Communities of America (GCA) is able to work out its financial difficulties (see page 1) and get back to building and operating golf course communities.

The Orlando-based firm has

Continued on next page

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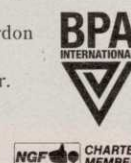
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