

Winter work cold but fruitful in N.H.

CLAREMONT, N.H. — At Claremont Country Club here, superintendent Danny Whitcomb let his members know the extent of work his crew does in the winter months with this *Letter to Golfers*.

The snow is falling, the wind is blowing, and you're sitting in front of your fireplace reading about the golf course you would love to play sometime in your life. Then you doze off to dream about the best round of golf you have ever had and you hope it repeats itself this coming summer. The next day you're driving past your local course and you see the gates

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open to the maintenance shop and all the lights on, and you think to yourself, "What could they possibly be doing there this time of year?"

As golf course superintendents, our dreams are also reality in the winter. Maintenance is a very high portion of golf course maintenance. We have equipment that runs seven days a week all summer, some that run three days a week, some that run twice a week. You add all those hours up and most homeowners don't put that many hours on their own mowers in 10 years.

The average run time per mower on our course is between 250 and 300 hours per season. That's why it is so important for winter maintenance. Parts wear out, bearings and seals need replacing, wiring needs checking and replacing, motors need tuning up and rebuilding, reels need grinding — and the list goes on.

It is so important to maintain equipment for two reasons. The first is dependability throughout the summer. (Golfers really don't want to hear "The greens are not mowed because I'm waiting for parts.") I'm not saying things don't break in the summer, but we do try to prevent that from happening, and if it does, most of the time we have the parts to fix it.

Superintendents will also stay some nights as late as necessary to get equipment running for the next day. The second thing is trade-in value. If equipment is maintained very well, the more money we can get on a trade. I've always thought well-maintained equipment is happy equipment, and when equipment runs like it should, the help running it is happy, too.

In the summer maintenance doesn't stop. Reels get sharpened once a week, mowers get greased once a week (some mowers have 50 to 72 grease fittings), oils get changed every 40 to 50 hours of run time, and, on our golf course, the maintenance averages between 15 and 30 hours per week. Equipment gets washed off after every use. The equipment also gets waxed three or four times per summer.

We do all this to protect our investment. After all, equipment is very expensive so keeping it in excellent shape is a wise investment.

Superintendents also try to resolve problems that may occur on the golf course: more drainage, irrigation, fewer chemicals. A superintendent once told me, you have to "think outside the box." You are pretty much stuck in your box because your brain is conditioned by your experiences. The way to accomplish this is by associating with others who are thinking and solving problems based on their own experiences.

Golf course superintendents are blessed with a working environment that attracts people. The outdoors is an attraction and so is the pleasure of growing things.

So, the next time you're kicked back in your chair in front of your fireplace dreaming about the best round of golf you've ever had, your golf course superintendent is working very hard throughout the winter to make your dreams come true.

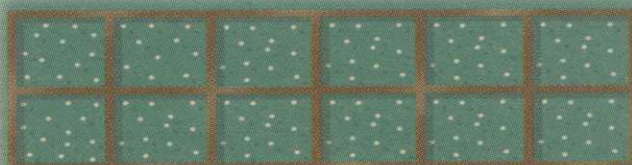


Winter work reaps fine summer results at Claremont Country Club.



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