

SPOOKY

I used to hate Halloween. It always seemed to be a well-intentioned kiddie holiday that had devolved into an excuse for moronic behavior by grownups who believe it's acceptable to drink until they puke on their shoes as long as they have a lame costume on.

In my days as a serious professional drinker, I considered Halloween (and it's equally idiotic cousin, New Years Eve) to be amateur hour. I shunned those holidays in much the same way I avoid air travel during the summer when the entire Clark Griswold clan is almost certain to be in front of me in the TSA line at the airport or clogging the overhead storage bins with lacrosse sticks and skateboards on their way to a Wally World vacation.

(Grumpy Business Traveler Side Note: For the love of god, if you don't travel a lot, try not to be an idiot in the security screening. Your little joke about having a bomb hidden up someplace where the sun don't shine will screw up both of our schedules. Seriously...)

But, I've mellowed a bit with age (and nearly two years of sobriety, thank you very much) and I see Halloween in a new light. I now see it as a warm, wonderful event where I get to pollute other people's kids with candy, ogle the occasional Naughty Space Girl... and find the premise for a column just as my deadline approaches.

So, here's my Halloween-inspired column idea: Let's look at the spooky season that just concluded and I'll hand out an assortment of tricks, treats and lumps of coal to mark the occasion.

Trick: Mother Nature tricked us into thinking that the Northeast might have a decent golf year when the snow melted early and we had about a day and a half of nice weather in March. That changed pretty dramatically and spring was washed out. The real trick will be for superintendents whose facilities were underwater during some prime playing weeks to avoid budget cuts due to cash-flow shortfalls caused by the weather.

Treat: A giant-sized chocolate bar goes to the United States Golf Association Green Section for continuing to step forward and educate golfers about the realities of weather,

disease and other unavoidable consequences of their demands for fast, firm and perfect conditions. As disappointed as I was to see the old Green Section Record go out of print, the new newsletter version is a fabulous way to distribute ammunition to supers who need a credible, third-party explanation of why the course isn't up to standards. When the folks in the Blue Blazers step up and defend the maintenance staff, it matters.

Lump of Coal: A serious lump of coal goes into the bag of a supplier who would file a questionable defamation lawsuit against a fantastic superintendent and outstanding human being who had just hosted a very successful major championship. Enough said.

Treat: Yay! It stopped raining in the Northeast and we finally got some rounds in and helped the cash flow situation a bit.

Trick: It never rained in Texas.

Lump of Coal: Earthquakes, hurricanes and cicadas in the same week. It was truly biblical.

Treat: Watching China emerge as the global hot spot for golf.

Lump of Coal: To those unscrupulous few involved in the China golf development business who make it a habit of not paying for services provided by the designers, builders and agronomic consultants they have hired. Doing business in the "new China" shouldn't be that scary.

Treat: Basic chemical manufacturers continuing to invest in R&D to prove plant health benefits beyond just pest control (see our cover story).

Trick: Archaic patent laws that only allow original manufacturers a few years to recoup those enormous R&D costs before others can bring similar products to market.

Lump of Coal: Activist groups that will use any tactic – including wheeling children with cancer into public hearings – to cast doubt on the safety of those products.

Trick: Using a weak premise like this to get a column done.

Treat: I worked in a "National Lampoon's Vacation" reference for you. GCI



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