THINK FIRST

Pursue only those practices that you’ve thought long and hard about.

Whether dealing with a last-minute problem or a long-term situation, resist the urge to act until you’ve taken the most important step – giving it some thought.

“Think about dedicating a person to the monitoring and controlling of irrigation systems and their performances. This includes having a priority list of water sources and irrigation zones, while monitoring water use. And plan your schedule for the day, weeks, and months ahead. You’ll have to change your plans and adapt to changing situations, but without a plan, you’ll be a victim of whatever Mother Nature serves up. Use weather resources and online tools to create the optimal agronomic plan so that your course quality, which means they must have a plan in place that improves water efficiencies, enhances plant health, and improves soil performance. And you have to have thought about some contingencies if things don’t go as planned. And trust me, they won’t.”

You might find the subject of this column overly simple or even silly, but like Duich, I am encouraging each and every one of you to begin the new year by keeping that same word in mind: “Think.”

You could be a terrific superintendent, a dedicated steward of your golf course(s), a terrific boss, the perfect employee. But despite all that, your course could still be affected by:

- weather; irrigation and mowing practices; trees, vegetation; diseases and pests; old equipment; poor construction; budget (reduce or cut); industry initiatives or tournaments that divert attention; and so on.
- Let’s look at some areas of potential difficulty and see how thinking and advance planning could keep small problems small and solvable.
- Weather is the ultimate variable, the one factor you can’t control. But you can plan for it. Pay attention to the forecasts, long- and short-term.
- If you aren’t thinking every day about healthy turfgrass, then you are not doing your job. A healthy course should be job #1 because it will make or break your job. And nothing will get a super fired faster than losing the grass on the putting greens. I know you know that, but how much do you really think about it?
- About 50 percent of the game is contested on the greens. Are you on top of mowing strategies as they relate to green speeds? Will what you do in June affect your course, and you, in September? (Or for warm-season regions, January and May?)
- Superintendents neglect to think about course set-up philosophy. Speeds, pin positions, mowing patterns, cart paths, signage… those little things affect pace of play and course quality, which means they impact players attitudes.
- Finally, whenever you hear a new buzzword or read about the latest initiative to grow or save the game, think about how it applies to where you work. Thinking about adopting “fast and firm” or “going native”? Then consider the pace of play at your club. Sometimes these initiatives are not in the best interest of your course.

The solution to all these situations is simple: Think. Pursue only those practices that you’ve thought long and hard about, and judged that they truly make sense for your course.