

# Dustin's inferno

When it comes to defining the "Summer from Hell," Dustin Riley asks just what is your definition of "hell?"

Many are referring to Summer 2010 as the "Summer from Hell". But how do turf managers define "hell?" Too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry, high disease pressure, reduced fungicide budget etc., etc., etc.

As we reflect back on the Summer of 2010, we may have varying criteria for the "hell" each of us remember. But in the end, we are all referring to the environmental stress that was applied to our golf course turf.

The summer of 2010 was not the typical summer. If you proceeded with the same old programs, you probably encountered some issues. The weather stress was just too great on the turf and adjustments in management needed to be made. Surviving such a difficult summer requires implementing stress relieving practices before the onset of those stresses. I know, easier said than done. The one key change I expanded into my turf management program is practice of rotational venting of the putting surfaces.

Rotational venting? Yes, rotational venting. Many of us were reminded that high nighttime temperatures can be more stressful to the turf than a 90-degree day. The soil relies on the nighttime temperatures to cool down and drawn in fresh air. When soils are wet from repeated rainfalls and continually absorbs solar heat each day, but cannot cool down at night, the turf becomes stressed.

Venting is the practice of poking very small holes on the putting surface.

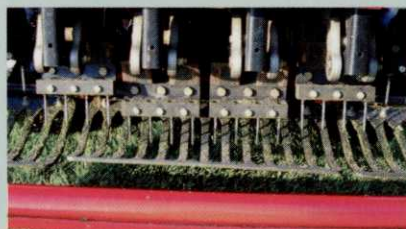
Millions of vent holes allow warm soils to cool and allow fresh air to penetrate the soil. Creating these vent holes will help keep a fresh supply of oxygen to the turf roots. In a sense, the venting process allows the greens and soil to breathe easier. The fresh air promotes healthier and more expansive root systems. The stronger the root system, the stronger the plant and the better it'll handle summer stresses. In addition, the small vent holes will also provide wonderful mini-channels for irrigation and rain water to enter the soil profile during dry conditions.

The venting process can be performed frequently through the summer if a scheduled rotation can be coordinated. For me, I utilize three

“Surviving such a difficult summer requires implementing stress relieving practices before the onset of those stresses.”



walking greens mowers with separate mowing route assignments. Each week, a different mowing route is targeted for venting. The actual venting process per green requires the same amount of time to complete as mowing (15-20 minutes) By targeting only six to seven greens per event, the venting process can be completed ahead of a greens mower and any early morning golfers. My venting program runs from late-May through mid-August



(core-aeration). As a result, each green is vented on a three-week rotation and four times throughout the summer.

This rotational venting program provided a valuable agronomic benefit to my putting surfaces and helped me survive the stressful Summer of 2010.

# Summer replay

Chris Lecour considers Summer 2010 the "best ever."

While many Superintendents across the country are wishing the summer of 2010 never happened, I look back and wish I could relive much of it all over again. 2010 was the year I stopped being a superintendent. Let me tell you how I spent my summer vacation.

Like many golf clubs in North America, my club was struggling. Designed as a golf and residential community, the golf course was the centerpiece for the entire development. When the recession hit in 2008 everything, everywhere, just seemed to stop. With the arrival this past winter of a new majority partner to rescue the development, who also owns a neighboring golf course just minutes away, my position soon became obsolete. One superintendent would manage both golf courses and by the end of July, I was gone.

The truth is I enjoyed my best summer ever. I spent more time with my kids than I can remember, more time with my wife than she'd care to remember and I loved every minute of it. I slept in late, stayed up late, rode my bike, enjoyed weekends (full weekends mind you, not half a weekend after working a full day on Saturday) at the cottage with friends, and saw New York and Chicago for the first time. Essentially, I did many of the things I wish I had done over the past five years; things I could have easily done in the past five years if I had kept my job and my responsibilities in perspective. Too often I put my job ahead of my family. The last few years saw a shift away from that attitude, but still it became too easy to come up with an excuse to go back to the course in the evening "just in case something went wrong." Let me share some wisdom gained over the past few months: If you're responsible and doing a good job, as most of us are, things just "don't go wrong." When you leave the course for the night, don't come back until morning. It will still be there upon your return.

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I'd be lying if I said I'd been living carefree since my departure. There have been a few anxious moments, usually when I'm reminded of the reality of a shrinking job market in a very slowly recovering economy. Really, I was no better or no worse than any number of good superintendents faced with a similar life crisis; I simply came out on the wrong side of the numbers game. Almost anybody could find themselves on the wrong side over the next 5 years. However, a good friend reminded me, "The cream always rises to the top." I may not come out of this lull with the highest paying job in the area, but I know where the top is now and I intend to be there, enjoying it with the people who are most important to me.

The life of a superintendent moves pretty quick. To go from zero to 60 back to zero again in the middle of the season is not easy. I'm grateful for all the support I received since I left the club and I'm reminded of a chance encounter and conversation I had with a local superintendent at the end of September. When I told him how I had been spending my time he replied, "Man, I really envy you." That comment helped put things in perspective, and I couldn't have agreed with him more.



**CHRIS LECOUR**, former superintendent.

The Raven Golf Club at Lora Bay, Collingwood, Ontario, Canada.

<http://chrislecour.blogspot.com/>

Lecour's final post was dated July 30, 2010

# EXPANDING THE

## OUR GROWING TEAM OF COMPANY PARTNERS

The following is our growing list of *Links* Company Partners that have committed to join our team in this endeavor. **This means that when they become involved in a *Links* project, the team partners will contribute profit, goods or services to assist in achieving the development of the *Links* short courses at a significantly lower cost.**

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Bruce Company of Wisconsin – Dave Weber /  
Eagle View Golf, LLC – Ronald Matthews / Glase Golf, Inc. – James Glase /  
Golf Creations – Jim Lohmann / Golf Works – Frank Hutchinson /  
Landscapes Unlimited – Bill Kubly / MacCurrach Golf Construction /  
Mid-America Golf & Landscape – Rick Boylan / NMP Golf Construction Corp. – Yves Brousseau /  
Turf Solutions Group LLC / Wadsworth Golf Construction – Patrick Karnick

### GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

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Dye Designs Group – O'Brien McGarey / Ed Gerlach / Art Hills/Steve Forrest /  
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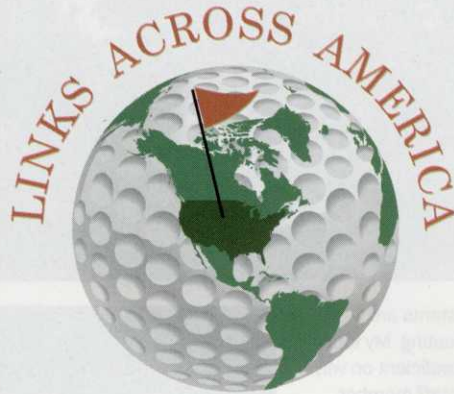
Ace Golf Netting / Club Car / CGL of Savannah – Golf Management /  
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Thompson, Dyke & Associates – Recreation/Sports Complex Design / The Toro Company /  
Tour Edge Golf / Turf Solutions Group LLC / Wilson Golf / Wittek Golf

For further details contact Leon McNair at [leonm@wadsworthgolf.com](mailto:leonm@wadsworthgolf.com)



# GAME OF GOLF

The Wadsworth Golf Charities Foundation and its **growing list of Company Partners from the Golf Industry**, that have committed to join this important endeavor, partner with park districts, YMCA's municipalities, existing golf courses First Tee Chapters, school districts,



hospitals & forest preserve districts to develop "feeder short courses" (three, six or nine-hole) across the country to provide affordable golf for youth, families, adult beginners and individuals with injuries & disabilities from all ethnic backgrounds.

## Short Course Projects That Opened in 2010

### **Dundee Township Park District**

Five-hole par 3 course with putting, chipping & pitching greens.

The Wadsworth Foundation wishes to recognize **The Bruce Company of Wisconsin and Lohmann Golf Design** for their significant contributions to this *Links* short course project.

### **The First Tee of Savannah**

Added forward tees to create a three-hole short course & new driving range at the Mary Calder GC.

The Wadsworth foundation wishes to recognize **MacCurrach Golf Construction, Paul Loague Golf Design, Ace Golf Netting, Wittek Golf, Club Car, Wilson Golf, International Paper Co., CGL of Savannah and The First Tee of Savannah** for their collaboration and contributions to make this *Links* short course project a reality.

## Projects Scheduled for 2011

### **The First Tee of NW Arkansas**

Three-hole short course, driving range & short game practice area in Lowell, AR.

Construction is scheduled to begin in early spring and the Wadsworth Foundation wishes to recognize **David Whelchel**, who is providing the design services for this *Links* short course project.

### **The City of Fort Worth, Texas**

Six-hole par 3 short course at the City owned Rockwood 18-hole golf course.

Construction will begin in late spring and the Wadsworth Foundation wishes to recognize **John Colligan**, who is the golf course architect for this *Links* project.

### **The First Tee of Harrisonburg, VA**

This project involves regrassing & renovation work to restore their three-hole par 3 short course.

The renovation work will begin this spring and the Wadsworth Foundation wishes to recognize the **McDonald Design Group** for their assistance on this *Links* short course project.

## Projects in the Planning/Design Stage Scheduled for 2012

- **The YMCA & First Tee of Rapid City, SD.**, nine-hole short course.
- **Alameda Junior Golf Assoc., Alameda, CA.**, nine-hole par 3.
- **The First Tee of Green Bay, WI. & Brown County Forest Preserve**, three-hole & range.
- **The First Tee of San Jose, CA.**, renovation of the driving range & new putting/chipping green.
- **Rockford Illinois Park District**, new nine-hole short course and driving range.
- **Peoria Illinois Park District**, adding forward tees to create a short course at their Madison GC.
- **The First Tee of Charlottesville, VA.**, nine-hole short course and driving range.
- **University at Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska**, nine-hole par 3

## Just do it

Under the most trying of circumstances, Paul Sabino and his team persevered by paying attention to the fundamentals.

What "Summer from Hell"? The season that included more than 33 days of temperatures breaking 90 degrees, consistently extreme levels of humidity, intense downpours or contrasting drought? How did we keep predominately Poa Annuua, push up style greens alive with a reduced operational budget which included a labor budget that equaled our actual from the year 2000? Smoke and mirrors baby!

In my honest review of this season's success, under the most trying of circumstances, we did it by paying attention to the

**“ We truly did have some of the best playing conditions in one of the worst weather years in my 20 years as superintendent at The Farms CC.”**

fundamentals. We focused on planning, prioritizing, experience, solid agronomics, adaptability, execution and communication.

I went into the season with a good plan. The key to the plan was managing budget reductions while still maintaining course conditions at a high level. I focused on what I thought course conditions should be and compared it to member expectations. I found that some conditions I considered noticeably sub-par were not as apparent to our members. I reduced expenses in their "non-priority" areas and channeled the funding into the higher priorities.

The veteran maintenance staff was an integral component

to the plan. My assistants are proficient at pest scouting. My top five employees are proficient on wilt patrol. Every single staff member knows and is required to pay attention. If it doesn't look right, say something! This management style afforded us the flexibility to adapt to everything that was thrown at us all year. In addition, we kept the bodies fresh with rotating vacation time. We always had staff coverage and overtime was almost nonexistent. I couldn't be more proud of them. They were the preverbal glue.

2010 started with a good agronomic foundation. We had aerified aggressively in the fall of 2009. Half inch tines on the Pro-Core and three quarter inch tines on the Verti-Drain. The members were not thrilled with putting conditions in late 2009, but I think it really made a difference. Ground conditions were firm in March, 2010 and I was able to aerify early with quarter inch tines.

Balanced and consistent water soluble fertilization, in conjunction with growth regulator applications, was key to the consistent quality of the putting surfaces. The greens received an average of .15 pounds of nitrogen per thousand and Primo Maxx at six ounces per acre every ten days. We did not apply any bio-stimulant products at all but did supplement with iron and micronutrient products. When we backed off on fertility levels to prepare for an important event we would time our next application so it would be "kicking in" immediately following. This was important to



Paul Sabino: "In my honest review of this season's success, under the most trying of circumstances, we did it by paying attention to the fundamentals."

relieving stress following repetitive days of double cutting and rolling.

The triplex mowers were set at .115 inches, with Wiehle rollers, for the entire season and we skipped the cleanup passes three times per week. We rolled the greens three to four times per week on average. Mowing and rolling frequency was dictated primarily by the golf schedule. We pushed it too. When we had gaps in the schedule we reduced mowing and rolling and performed needle-tining and hydrojecting. These practices helped to offset the severe environmental and mechanical induced stresses.

Our fungicide program went seven percent over budget. I was pleased with that considering the duration of the intense disease pressure. The constant rotation of chemistry classes and preventative treatments were successful.

Ahhh, irrigation! We had one employee scouting for wilt almost every day, from eleven to five, for nearly four

months. If he got overwhelmed, we immediately pulled people off other jobs, regardless of their importance. Our primary focus was hand syringing instead of automatic irrigation. Hand watering and vigilant scouting was everything! The extensive use of a variety of wetting agents applied by injection, sprayer and proportioner aided tremendously.

Finally, and I can't stress this enough, communication with the membership was huge. Whether I used my new blog (best tool ever!), mass emails, personal contact, or planes flying overhead toting banners, our members knew everything that was going on every step of the way!

We truly did have some of the best playing conditions in one of the worst weather years in my 20 years as superintendent at The Farms CC. We lost some grass but it was very minimal. Heck, that happens every year and that's why they sell white paint. If turf dies, and it will, no matter how good you are, know how to fix it and communicate that too.

How did we get through the Summer from Hell? We just did what we do.

**PAUL SABINO**, superintendent, The Farms Country Club, Wallingford, Conn.

<http://farmscsuperintendent.blogspot.com/Sabino> is also a part-time blogger for [CTgolfer.com](http://CTgolfer.com):  
[www.ctgolfer.com/blogs/paul\\_sabino/](http://www.ctgolfer.com/blogs/paul_sabino/)



# SUMMER 2010: A weather expert's recap

In 2010 weather became a crucial factor for the survival of the golf course industry. The industry had hoped for an upswing in the rounds played following the previous year's economic downturn.

Warmer than normal sea surface temperatures in the far equatorial regions of the Pacific Ocean – known as El Niño – influenced atmospheric patterns and cold, stormy winter weather across the U.S. in January and February. Blustery and, in some cases, near-record cold kicked off the New Year. Winter golfers from the Carolinas to Florida encountered the coldest January in 17 years and the wettest in the last four. Most notable was the persistent cold air that penetrated deep into Florida. Southern Florida courses refused to warm up during the second week of January. On nine mornings the temperature cooled to morning lows in the 30's in Palm Beach County and during one seven-day stretch the mercury briefly topped 60. On January 9 the high in Melbourne on Florida's central Atlantic Coast peaked at 40 degrees after an early morning low in the 20s.

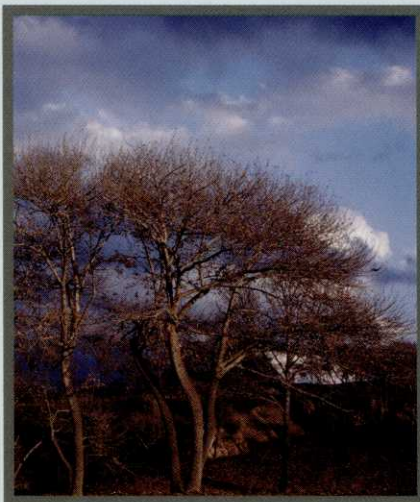
**February** brought stubbornly cold and windy weather. In the transitional states of Texas and Oklahoma to the Carolinas, Georgia and even Florida was some of the coldest in the last 100 winters. Each experienced one of the top ten coldest Februaries ever with morning temps in the 20s and 30s.

**March** rolled in those warm Pacific Ocean temperatures began to cool. The resulting La Niña – cooler oscillation phase of the tropical Pacific surface temps – brought a rather abrupt end to the long-lasting cold that plagued much of the U.S. From the Pacific Northwest through the Midwest and Northeast temperatures warmed to above normal. Rhode Island had its warmest March ever and Maine is second warmest. The Deep South remained slightly cooler than normal, but saw some recovery with relatively mild weather. South Carolina and Georgia courses warmed above 60 most of the time with at least 10 days above 70. However, January-March remained the coldest ever in Florida and second coldest ever in Louisiana.

Despite the arrival of warmer weather in the Northeast, the change in weather patterns delivered one of the wettest months ever to much of the area. March's signature storm on the 13th hit courses hard from southern and coastal sections of New Jersey through Massachusetts, littering fairways and greens with trees and branches. The storm, one of the most intense Nor'easters in a dozen years, knocked out power and dumped rainfall amounts from six to ten inches in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and New Jersey with wind gusts to near Hurricane (70-75 mph) force. Unfortunately, many flooded courses were hit hard again just two weeks later with another

deluge which brought rainfall totals for the month to their highest ever, with nearly 10 inches in the New York City area, up to 15 inches in the Boston region and almost 17 inches in parts of Rhode Island. Fairways that succumbed to the inundation of rain took the entire month and even longer to dry out and return to normal.

At the start of **April**, the rest of the country was beginning to experience more typical spring conditions. Southern California courses were warming up nicely with near perfect conditions for much of the month, and the Deep South – although still cooler than normal – was delivering a high number of playable days. By the end of the month, even the northeast began drying out. Precipitation was light for most areas east of the Mississippi and only the Pacific Northwest



experienced above normal rainfall. Golf courses across parts of the Great Lakes and Midwest, which had seen mostly light precipitation for much of 2010, needed irrigation more often than not during the spring. Little did we know this would be a harbinger of the more severe heat and drought conditions that would prevail across most of the east during the summer?

As **May** and **June** arrived the combination of a strengthening La Niña, lingering heat from El Niño and some of the warmest Atlantic surface temperatures ever produced continued warmer than normal atmospheric conditions from the leeward slopes of the Rockies to the East Coast. Wet conditions returned to the Midwest and Great Lakes with flooding in the upper Mississippi. It was the wettest ever in Michigan and among the wettest in Iowa and Illinois, as well. May brought the first of many hot days to the Northeast. The Washington DC area saw its first 3 days of 90 degree heat, followed by another nineteen 90 degree plus days in June and one topping 100. The heat intensified during the period from Maine to Florida. In June, Myrtle

Beach courses hit the 90s on all but five days.

**July** and **August** continued to bake many East Coast courses. The four-month period from May to **August** became either the hottest ever or in the Top 3 hottest for every contiguous state from Maine to Florida. The heat intensity was so great that afternoon temperatures topped 100 on more than one occasion as far north as New England. The mercury soared above 90 on about 50 days in the Philadelphia area and an unbelievable 70 days in the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia area. This shattered previous records. Unfortunately, while air temperature reported by weather stations is measured at about 6 feet above the ground, turf surfaces exposed to full sunshine likely reached 110 to 120 degrees or more during the hottest of the summer days. In some cases, 20 consecutive days or more of 90 degree-plus heat prevailed with little or no rain.

In contrast, La Niña's cooling effects on the West Coast continued to produce near ideal conditions from California to Oregon during much of the summer. It was perhaps a bit too cool in Washington State at times, but a great deal more comfortable than what the east was dealing with.

As **autumn** arrived the hottest heat of the summer came to an end but still remained above normal. Overall, the fall weather was the most favorably and forgiving to both courses and players across the U.S. Florida, however, was exceptionally arid for much of the fall, recording a record dry **October** with only an average .39 inches state-wide. The hurricane season was quieter than normal with only minimal affects along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Most storms veered out to sea before hitting the mainland.

As 2010 closed, atmospheric steering currents in the northern Pacific again shifted southward, bringing a series of large long-lasting storms to the Pacific coast states and record rains from Oregon to southern California. After escaping the extreme weather most of the year, December brought the "Great California Flood." Although Northern California fared the best, some courses in San Diego County became almost entirely consumed by flooded waters.

The Climate Extreme Index (CEI) is a value that accounts for extreme variation in weather from year to year and has been measured by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration since 1996. In 2010, the index value was 9 percent above normal, a confirmation that yes, the weather during the year did produce more extremes. The good news is that CEI values have been as high as 20 percent above normal back as recently as the late 90s and have been in a decline since. **GC**

*Frank P. Lombardo is a certified consulting meteorologist and president of WeatherWorks in Hackettstown, N.J.*

A weather expert's view

# Taking

Whether a facility restores the course to its former state, or renovates using new ideas, problem solving

# issue



NUZZO COURSE DESIGN



By Peter Blais

**W**hen Bobby Weed Golf Design signed on to renovate and manage Palatka, Fla.'s Donald Ross-designed municipal golf course earlier this year, the firm's goal was to address a marriage of interests.

Weed's vision for the course included design, agronomic, infrastructure and operational improvements, as well as a sympathetic adherence to the original intent of the Donald Ross design, one of just 20 municipal layouts left in the country bearing the classic designer's imprint.

"We have long advocated that golf course designers need to be aware of and influence the business aspects of any course's operation, more so today than ever before," says Bobby Weed, noting the difficult economic climate in which today's course operators toil.

But at the same time, Weed appreciated the significance of this historic landmark – which has been in continuous operation since 1925 – which the city commissioners had entrusted to his care.

"The irreversible impact of losing such a vital, historical resource was not lost on the community," says Weed, addressing the support he sought from the city, Putnam County, residents that golf, and residents that do not in this remodeling project. "Our responsibility is to protect and enhance this partnership as we invest in improving the golf course."

#### REMODELING'S VALUE IN TOUGH TIMES

As Chicago-area architect Bob Lohmann points out on his Web site, renovation has become an enormous priority for private clubs and public facilities because golf courses are living things – they wear out – but also because the building boom that characterized the late 1990s placed enormous competitive pressures on existing courses. As a result, top-tier clubs feel the need to renovate to maintain their elite status, and more-modest

operations feel the need to renovate to survive and compete.

Whether an owner decides to "restore" the course to its former state, or "renovate" using new ideas, the one unifying issue among all reconstructions is this: They address an issue or issues that clients want solved.

While historic preservation and course strategy may have been the main reason his phone rang with remodeling requests during the boom times of the late 1990s and early 2000s, in these tougher economic times club managers' main remodeling concerns involve maintenance or playability issues.

The impetus to action, he says, is usually something like poor drainage that results in loss of play or conditions that leave the course just looking ugly. Operators are more likely to spend money during this penny-pinching era on repairing ditches, holes, or the like.

Speed of play is another reason they might want to remodel, the Illinois designer says. Courses that have too many blind shots, tricky hazards or difficult greens with poor grasses that are difficult to putt – such as Westmoor CC in Brookfield, Wis., where LGD recently oversaw the replacement of 18 *Poa annua* greens with A4 bentgrass – are simply too tough to play for the average golfer. The threshold for most players is about four hours. If it takes more than that they might choose not to play.

"If we could ever get the time to play 18 holes down to three hours that might do more to help the game grow than anything else we could do," says the head of Lohmann Golf Designs.

Lohmann believes course operators are beginning to understand that the reason most people play golf is very simple – to have fun. That's tough to do if average players are losing balls all the time because the course is too hard to play. Unfortunately, courses are often designed for the top 5 percent of players

How can private and public clubs measure ROI from a remodeling project? The best measure should be increases in golf-related revenue compared to the cost of capital improvement.

who speak up about what they want. They are the ones who want the courses Stimping at 13 with tricky runoff areas near the putting surfaces. Rather than spending time and money there, courses should focus on maintenance issues and perhaps adding a forward set of senior/junior tees that would help folks get around the course quicker.

Installing high-tech irrigation systems with

multiple rows of irrigation heads that cost a million dollars or more – the rage during the course-building boom – can be course-budget killers today. “You don’t need an irrigation head everywhere there is grass,” Lohmann says. “Focus on the important areas – greens, tees and fairways – in that order.”

It is the same for intricate bunkers with flashed-up faces, often neck-and-neck with

greens when it comes to ongoing maintenance costs. Such costly hazards make little sense for most public courses, Lohmann says. “They look good but most wash out in five to seven years, the sand gets contaminated and you have to rebuild them. Bunker consistency is much more important than appearance. I occasionally wake up in the middle of the night and watch some of the old Major tournament highlights on television. The bunkers they played from back then were much less fancy than those built at many courses today.”

Tees are one area that do need attention occasionally, Lohmann says. They wear out in time. They even lose elevation from continual divots taken on the par 3s. He is also a proponent of wide fairways, where golfers can easily find their balls and enjoy friendly lies.

“The goal should be good greens, tees and fairways,” he adds. If players stray from those areas, well, they basically deserve what they get. You don’t need a perfect lie in the rough.”

**PRIVATE CLUBS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT**

With their larger pocketbooks and different motivations, private clubs’ motivations to remodel differ from their public-facility cousins, noted Colorado architect Rick Phelps of Phelps-Atkinson Golf Design.

Phelps sees three reasons for private clubs to remodel. The first is to change the position of the club in the marketplace. The second is to maintain the course/club and keep it current with modern agronomic practices and aesthetic expectations. Third, a club may consider remodeling to reduce annual maintenance costs if existing conditions are creating extensive hand labor that could be significantly reduced by rebuilding some or all of the golf course features. The last option could include items as simple as reducing irrigated and maintained turf to something as extensive as rebuilding bunkers and tee complexes.

Changing the position of the club in the marketplace most often involves a relatively extensive remodel project, Phelps says. The overriding intent is to give the course and club an entirely new image. Often, this includes major renovation or reconstruction of a clubhouse.

The second option, maintaining the course while keeping it current with agronomic and aesthetic expectations, he continued, is most often a case of completing “deferred mainte-

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nance” all at once. For example, bunkers need to be rebuilt periodically due simply to the nature of their use. Sand is blasted out onto the play-side lips, which then get dry and lose their shape over a period of time, typically 10 to 20 years depending on frequency of play. The sand also becomes contaminated, causing it to lose its ability to drain freely. Contamination occurs from the sub-soil, the

irrigation water and even from atmospheric pollutants.

Bunker reconstruction is not usually part of the typical annual maintenance budget or program, but is something that still needs to be planned and budgeted periodically to keep the golf course in “competitive” condition, Phelps says.

Other aesthetic and playability items also

fall into the category of deferred maintenance such as cart path repairs/replacement, drainage improvements, tree removal/pruning/replacement and others. All of these items are not annual maintenance practices, but are essential parts of long-term upkeep. “They can be seen as maintaining the investment as much as changing it,” Phelps says.

The final option, remodeling to reduce maintenance costs, can be highly variable in terms of the extent of necessary work and potential effects. At some courses, very little work can result in significant savings of maintenance dollars. Reducing irrigated turf is a great way to save maintenance costs with very little up-front input. On the other hand, completely rebuilding bunkers to change to a more easily maintainable style can be relatively costly to implement and may take many years to pay back in cost savings.

For a facility struggling to survive in this economy, the value of added capital investment is a “golfer flight to value,” says Michael Vogt, head of the golf division at McMahon Group, a private club-consulting firm.

“Prices continue to decline for golf across most venues,” he says. “Members and daily-fee players will seek value in the courses they play. New or renovated components on golf courses will enhance value. Unfortunately, as courses go out of business due to a less-value scenario the business left in a micro-economic environment will capture the play in the community or at least in the specific geographic area. Clubs need to understand – a correction benefits the best clubs.”

With both public and private facilities looking for more ways to attract the family’s recreation dollar, golf courses are seeking to diversify their offerings via remodeling.

Lohmann says his firm is starting to see some remodels emphasizing multiple uses for a golf course: adding or repairing ponds so they can be used for fishing and skating; fairways that can host cross-country skiing; driving ranges that can be an additional revenue source; redesigning routings so players can take advantage of three-, six-, nine- or 12-hole loops as time allows.

On the home front, Weed is involved in what he terms a “repositioning” at Selva Marina Country Club in Atlantic Beach, Fla. Repurposing projects, he says, involve entitling alternative land-uses within existing golf course envelopes. The value provided by these new land uses is leveraged to fund comprehensive course upgrades. At Selva Marina, his firm planned a 30-acre, neo-traditional



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