

Late last year, when we conducted an online survey to gather information for our annual state of the industry report, we asked superintendents to list the current challenges they face at their respective golf courses. Many of their replies reflected a similar challenge — although it's more of a nagging problem than a challenge.

After reading their responses, it's evident this problem is rampant at golf courses throughout the nation — from country clubs to public tracks to municipal facilities. And the problem seems to be growing. In fact, it's turning into King Kong, and superintendents are lugging this mammoth-sized monkey of a mess around on their backs.

The problem is golfers and their impractical demands for perfect conditions. But let's allow the superintendents who responded to the survey to better define this headache.

"Demanding members that want dollar greens on a dime budget," said Robert Stringer, the certified golf course superintendent of Germantown Country Club in Germantown, Tenn.

"Giving very rich members weekend-TV-tournament-quality golf for 52 weeks of the year," said David Major, the certified superintendent and director of agronomy at Shady Canyon Golf Club in Dana Point, Calif.

Perhaps Brian Mohr, superintendent of Spencer Municipal Golf Course in Spencer, Iowa, summed up the problem best with a call for a solution. "There needs to be a huge effort in educating people that it's not possible or feasible to maintain a golf course at the level people see on television for the pro events," he said.

While this is a current problem, it has also been in reruns longer than *Leave It to Beaver*. And as the conditioning and maintenance standards continue to rise at courses that host televised professional tournaments, golfers will continue to stare in amazement at the lush green fairways and the fast, smooth greens on their TV screens and say to themselves, "That's what I want at my course!"

What they fail to realize, unless they're members at Augusta National or another esteemed club, is they can't have those near-perfect conditions at their courses because their courses don't

Time to Address Timeworn Topic

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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have the bucks in their maintenance budgets to furnish them.

I realize this topic gets beaten like Tiger Woods' wedge when golf's most "explosive" player is having a bad day. But when several superintendents list it as a *present* challenge — and I'll bet a sleeve of Titleist balls that more superintendents list the same challenge in our survey next year — I'm convinced that little is being done to battle the problem.

But it's a tough case to crack. It's not like a superintendent can go to his club's members and tell them he can't provide the superb conditions they desire because he doesn't have the resources to provide them. (Memo to superintendent who tries this explanation: Sears is hiring.)

Echoing Mohr, there must be a huge effort in educating golfers to correct the problem. And that effort must begin now — not next month or next year — because the problem is growing as fast as broadleaf weeds in the spring. It's time superintendents rally together and come up with solutions to address the problem. While it's likely the problem can't be corrected entirely, it can be contained. But it will take time, effort and patience on behalf of superintendents. It will take solid organization.

Many of you know that golfers' demands for Augusta-like conditions at your courses are unreasonable. You don't deserve this undue pressure.

If you have any ideas on what to do to correct this problem, please call me or write me an e-mail to share your solutions. *Golfdom* will publish your thoughts in an upcoming issue to help superintendents share information with each other to help correct this matter. We'd like to be part of the huge effort to educate.

It's time to tell these golfers to get real.

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