

It's been a busy spring here at Lake Omigosh Country Club. In the 19th Hole Grille & Whine Bar, incoming Green Chairman Bert Warnecke is downing his second Long Island iced tea in less than 30 minutes. His head is shaking back and forth and he is mumbling to himself. Outgoing chairman Mel Crowder walks up to him and says: "My God, Bert you look terrible. Are you all right?"

Bert replies wearily, "Mel, what have I gotten myself into? I don't want Duffy to think I don't know anything about agronomy and turfgrass." (Duffy McDuffy is the superintendent. He's been at Lake Omigosh for seven years.)

Mel laughs and says: "Bert, he already knows you don't know anything about growing grass. He's wondering if you are coming in with an agenda or an open mind. Your real job is to keep the members from sabotaging the golf course with unrealistic demands. You need to watch Duffy's back and take a bullet for him when someone goes off half-cocked."

Bert frowns. "That doesn't sound like much fun," he says. "When Artie Blodgett (Club President Artemus Blodgett, U.S. Army, retired) recruited me for the chairmanship, he asked me if I would serve, and I told him then I didn't know anything about agronomy. He said, 'That's the beauty of it. You don't need to know anything about turfgrass; you just have to tell the superintendent what to do!'

"I've seen golf courses on TV, so I know what our course is supposed to look like, and thanks to Johnny Miller I know all about grain. But what you're saying is a real downer. I mean, I've already got a list of memorial trees I want to plant next to the ninth and 18th greens. There's one for my dad, Earl, who helped found this club and my dog, Fred, who was my best buddy."

Mel puts a hand on Bert's shoulder, looks him square in the eyes and says, "Bert, I'm going to the United States Golf Association's Web site to make you a copy of 'Ten Common Mistakes Made by Green Committees' because you have already mentioned two or

Confessions from the 19th Hole

BY JOEL JACKSON



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three of them, and you haven't even been to your first aerification. I also had a steep learning curve when I took over as chairman. But Duffy has worked hard to give us a great golf course, and I don't want you screwing it up out of ignorance."

And then Mel tells Bert a story.

"Over at the new Kwitchyerbellyakin Golf Club, the green chairman told the superintendent he wanted fast greens," Mel says. "The superintendent said the greens were too immature, but he was forced to cut them down. The next month the chairman said he wanted faster greens. The superintendent said the late-summer growing conditions were stressing the greens. But the chairman reiterated, faster or else. The next month the chairman got into a bragging contest with another course, and he told the superintendent he wanted the fastest greens in the county. He took his own daily Stimpmeter readings to make sure the superintendent complied. The next month they lost six of the greens."

Bert said, "Wow! Did the green chairman resign or did the board of directors kick him off the committee?"

"Neither," Mel said. "They fired the superintendent. Bert, don't ever be like that jerk. Listen, learn and ask questions. Earn the superintendent's trust and there is no end to what he will do to give you the best golf course possible."

So long from Lake Omigosh, where the superintendent is dedicated, the crew is hard-working and the members are about par for the course.

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