

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

It's been busy here at the Lake Omigosh Golf Club as we weather the dog days of summer. Our superintendent Duffy McDuffy and his irrigation technician Tony Esposito have been playing Russian roulette with the watering schedule to try to keep the greens and tees alive amid 30-percent to 45-percent cutbacks imposed by the local water management district.

However, I have not heard of any similar water restrictions imposed on the breweries in the state. I suppose the number of golfers versus the number of beer drinkers affected might make the districts think twice before asking the community to sacrifice their suds. The man on the street or barstool doesn't consider a golf course as a business; it's a game. But continuing the great debate over "tastes great" and "less filling," well, now we're getting down to business.

Duffy often says, "Playing golf is a game. Operating a golf course is a business."

If more golfers acknowledged that their country clubs are businesses, then they might be more successful at weathering the hard economic times. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has tried to find ways for superintendents to help grow the game along with the rest of the industry, but it isn't always easy for employees to tell their bosses what they need to do. Clubs need to be flexible with course setup and create innovative programs to provide user-friendly golf days to encourage beginners. If the revenue stream continues to dry up, the land will be more valuable for real estate than golf.

Our club installed three video golf games in the grill, and the younger guys, already addicted to technology, are playing a round of virtual golf faster than a real round, which fits their lifestyles. They don't mind running up a big bar tab in air-conditioned comfort while multi-tasking a round of electronic golf, day trading on a cell phone and guzzling the brews made possible by unrestricted use of water, unlike another business I know well.

But there have been plenty of suds on the course during the drought, and I don't mean on the beverage cart. These suds are from the wetting agents being hand-watered on dry

The Rain Game Goes to Extremes

BY JOEL JACKSON



BEING AT THE
MERCY OF MOTHER
NATURE IS BAD
ENOUGH, BUT NOW
LOCAL WATER
DISTRICTS WANT TO
UP THE ANTE

spots around the course as Duffy and Tony try to make every drop of water go just a little further and last a little longer.

The irony is that the county commissioners just approved a new development down the street as if the increased tax base was somehow going to pump water instead of dollars into the region. Bring your own water if you're going to develop.

Instead of hiring water police or encouraging neighborhood snitches to find people watering on the wrong day or time, maybe the town should monitor its own poorly designed street medians, broken sprinkler heads spewing wasted water onto the streets, and zones that run during rainstorms. Leading by example is way better than "do as I say, not as I do!"

There's a 30-percent chance of an isolated thunderstorm today. If it rains, I think I'll take Duffy and Tony down to the Pitch & Putt Pub for a brewski. They sure have earned it trying to keep the greens green and the fairways mellow yellow.

Thunderstorm and hurricane season are upon us, and soon the drought deficiencies and water restrictions will disappear until the next dry spell. By the time our golfers start accepting brown grass and extra ball roll, we will be struggling to mow wet, soggy but green fairways and roughs and imposing golf car restrictions. Duffy will switch gears from trying to find more water to getting rid of it. What a life.

So long from Lake Omigosh where the superintendent watches the Weather Channel, the members learn brown can be beautiful and the crew drags around enough hose to stretch the length of our signature par-5.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.