

There's no better indicator of conspicuous consumption gone awry than the excess often found in today's "ideal" golf course locker room. It's stunning to witness the amount of money and concern directed toward such a tiny portion of the golf experience.

In the ideal locker room, the setting should be homey and simple. That means our ideal locker room is where shoes are shined, clothes are changed and the walls include just memorabilia to remind you where you are, but not so much that you feel like you've entered a hall of fame.

Lockers are big enough to store a hanging blazer and shirts and spare clubs, but not full tour bags. Saunas and Jacuzzis are not necessary if there are showers with just enough water pressure to put out, say, the Chicago fire. Towels are plentiful and preferably thick, but the club logo should not be displayed. You don't want to tempt golfers to take one home.

The showers feature private areas for disrobing and toweling off to discourage the never-pleasant site of grown men walking around naked. The counter areas are stocked liberally with various products like mouthwash and sunscreen. We don't need stuff from Kiehl's, just enough to provide everything a golfer needs to freshen up.

An attendant is present in the ideal locker room to shine shoes, listen to war stories from the links and greet golfers in a friendly but never excessively effusive way. He's well-versed in area dining establishments, sports and a variety of other vital topics to sustain a conversation with the tense guest awaiting his host's arrival. If need be, he can also fix a quick drink, though the ideal locker room should strive to separate the gathering and drinking area from the messy business of shoe maintenance.

Shoe horns are plentiful on the benches. A box of tees, ball markers and ballmark fixing tools are fully stocked. And that's all golfers need.

The locker-room layout is intentionally simple. There's one long hallway, and the

Lavish Not Needed in the Locker Room

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rows of lockers feed off a main traffic area. Or the locker room can take up two stories so an open-air room is created to better enjoy camaraderie of pre- and post-round banter.

The laughs and scowls echo around a two-story locker room better than one of those single-story, maze-like rooms that prove both confusing, unworkable and even claustrophobic. The upstairs aspect also allows windows to be opened without golfers being able to see in, providing natural ventilation. Never underestimate the importance of fresh air.

Plush carpet is a must in keeping with the home-like feel, as is a sense of scale. We don't want to feel like we're walking for miles to and from lockers, but we also want enough space on busy days to have our own bench to throw on some Etonics.

Finally, our ideal locker room features a comfortable but separate card room or gathering area where unwinding is the theme. There are a few books in cases, recent golf magazines on a table and of course, at least two televisions for sports viewing. (Please, no cable news. Let's keep it light.)

A wet bar is nearby, and perhaps food is served in this off locker room. This is also where scorecards are tabulated after a day on the links. And while the golf course provides sanctuary from everyday life, the off locker-room hangout is a safe haven from the travails of the links.

Laughs, friendly conversation and locker-room banter are not optional.

Contributing Editor Geoff Shackelford will sign his latest book, "Lines of Charm," as well as several other of his books at this month's Golf Industry Show. He will appear in the GCSAA bookstore from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Feb. 22.