

It was 2 p.m. on a hot August afternoon in the mid-Atlantic. The weather formula for the day was blazing sun + 10-mph breeze + low humidity = disaster waiting to happen.

My crew was preparing to leave for the day except for my faithful hand-water guy, and I had an important errand to run. I asked one of my other reliable guys if he could take a quick trip around the course to see if I needed to run a quick cool-down irrigation cycle on my ancient ryegrass/*Poa* tees before I left.

He answered with, "Sure." Then he proceeded to ask, "Do you want me to look at the fairways, too?"

It seemed as though time suddenly came to a screeching halt while I pondered his question. Not being a trained turf person, he obviously had no idea what I was up against in this situation. I was worried about the fate of a gazillion little grass plants and what degree of suffering they could withstand in my absence.

The questions were swirling around in my head:

- How hot is the grass right now?
- How much water is needed to keep it cool for the next couple of hours?
- How much water would be too much, inviting disease?
- How much play do we have right now?

But most importantly, I wondered how one can possibly go around and look at the tees for signs of heat stress and not look at the fairways while on your way to the next tee. What would you be looking at instead? Would you be driving the golf car with your eyes closed?

I took a deep breath as time resumed and simply said, "Oh yeah. That'd be great, thanks."

What I should have done is planned my day a little better so I could have just made that ride around the course myself. A superintendent's eyes need to see a golf course from many different aspects. But you have to guard against becoming complacent. Complacency has a way of dulling our vision. When you see the same thing every day, you tend to see it in the same way every day as well.

You need to look at things through the eyes of a turf manager, of course. But you also need to

Gaining a Fresh Perspective

BY JIM BLACK



IT JUST TAKES A
LITTLE IMAGINATION
TO EXAMINE YOUR
GOLF COURSE
THROUGH NEW EYES

see things from the perspective of the golfing customer, the head pro, the owner and board, all the way down to the maintenance crew employee.

My Aunt Ginny was a very accomplished artist. She had such amazing vision and could see art in everything. She worked in what seemed like hundreds of different media, but what I loved the most was the way she could see something old and "art it back to life."

She taught me once that the way to see the same-old thing in a new way is to look directly at it first, then squint your eyes just a little so that everything in your field of vision is a little blurry and out of focus. Within that blur is where you see balance (or not), color, depth and perspective.

Think about a place on your golf course that isn't quite what it could be — maybe a landing area or green or tee complex that always gives you some trouble. We all have that somewhere on our courses, don't we?

Go there and look hard at it, then give it the artist's eye for a minute or two. Amid this blurry vision, consider what you can do to this spot to make it better for the good of all — for golfers, for yourself and for the game. You'll be amazed what can materialize in your field of blurry vision.

You might see the need for a new bunker (or the need to remove one), the relocation of some teeing ground, or even the reshaping of a fairway to be more receptive to a certain shot.

Whatever your specific situation, if you're looking for some positive change in the way your golf course is played, perceived or maintained, try observing it with the eyes of an artist. It might just be the next big step your course needs.

Thanks, Aunt Ginny.

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