

From the Back Tees

■ OPINION

It has been a very rainy spring here at the Lake Omigosh Golf Club in central Florida. As a joke, Superintendent Duffy McDuffy began posting high and low tide times on the pro shop bulletin board.

Some of our more uptight members weren't laughing because the course was often closed to golf car traffic a couple days a week, and they could play golf only four to five times a week instead of their usual seven. Delays in early-morning start times as the crew tried to rebuild bunkers and slog around the course bred ill will among the dew sweepers who pride themselves on teeing off in the dawn twilight.

All I know is that when I came back from a four-day business trip, Orlando had gone from a minus 2.73-inch rainfall deficit for the year to a plus 7.23-inch surplus and set all-time records for the month of May.

Our watery tribulations paled in comparison to Superintendent Craig Currier's task at Bethpage Black Golf Course for the U.S. Open, though. He and the crew and the volunteers worked a miracle to part the waters and keep the U. S. Open afloat to its dramatic conclusion. Well done, one and all.

I don't know how a week of continuous rains in the Northeast and the river flooding in the Midwest earlier this spring squares with the supposed cataclysmic droughts we are supposed to be suffering thanks to global warming, aka climate change, but I'm sure the spinmeisters will come up with some reason to blame carbon dioxide and increase the cost of operating our golf course equipment.

Meanwhile, Duffy says these rains have wrecked his summer mowing, aerifying, verticutting and topdressing schedules. And, of course, soggy, closed or walking-only and cart path-only days hits the cash register at the worst time when the economy is lagging already.

Beyond golfer inconvenience is the diabolical one-two punch from Mother Nature. Too much rain screws with schedules and saturates root zones, and the cloudy days help breed fungus and algae growth. None of that concerns the golfers who wait impatiently for

Another Fine Lesson From Lake Omigosh

BY JOEL JACKSON



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AND COURSE

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the first rays of sunshine to return to the links. So, keep up those bulletins apprising them of course conditions and your programs to keep the turf healthy.

With the mowers parked more than usual, Duffy has been cranking up the spray rig more and applying PGRs to help keep the clippings down when he gives the fairways and roughs a whack. Although the other day he said it looked more like they were harvesting kelp instead of mowing grass.

Every dark cloud has a silver lining, though. With the rains comes filling reservoirs, aquifers, ponds and lakes on the courses that had been showing 3 to 6 feet of bottom just a few months ago. Water restrictions are pushed to the back burner and we all get some breathing room on that score.

Torrential rains and course flooding also reminds us of the old adage that "pay me now or pay me later" (or as Duffy says, "... again, and again and again") is true for a reason. Golf course site selection, design elements and construction are key up-front issues that need to be addressed thoughtfully. Investing in the best possible drainage systems from surface grading and contouring to the subsurface infrastructure will save time, money and customer aggravation down the line. The same goes for any future course renovation project.

So long from Lake Omigosh where the superintendent sets his computer to The Weather Channel, the crew takes SCUBA lessons, and the members wear those \$5 lightweight Disney rain ponchos.

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