

# From the Back Tees

■ OPINION

**I**t has been a topsy-turvy winter here at the Lake Omigosh Golf Club in central Florida. An overly warm fall and early winter have played heck with superintendent Duffy McDuffy's attempted overseeding on the greens and fairways. To top it off, two record-setting freezes in January and February had every blade of bermudagrass turned the color of straw.

The snowbirds who escaped the frozen tundra of the Midwest and Northeast are playing fewer rounds, and some have resigned their memberships, thanks to the recession. As they cut spending on green fees, so must Duffy cut spending on maintenance. The trick is how, where, what and when?

I was in his office the other day and I saw a new sign on his office wall. It read: "Yea, as you walk through the valley of the shadow of recession, you shall spray no weevil. You shall monitor and scout and raise the threshold for damage before you spray."

How many worm holes and cricket tunnels can your members tolerate on the greens? Ask them and establish Course Conditioning Standards developed by zero-based budgeting so they can see the costs and help decide where cuts are to be made. Who knows, dish detergent may become your new insecticide of choice. You must feed the turf, but can you put it on a Nutrient Watchers diet to lose some dollars in the budget and still stay healthy?

The ripple effects of the recession will affect everyone in the industry. But it is a unique opportunity to rethink how we approach the design, construction, maintenance and operation of our golf courses. As Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Past President David Downing said at the 2009 Golf Industry Show, "It's time to get back and focus on the game of golf."

Playing the game has always been the common denominator among golfers. It's time to re-evaluate all the fluff and eye candy that have driven up maintenance costs and get back to basics. We certainly now have the monetary motivation to do so. And while we're at it, let's

## McDuffy Just Keeps On Keeping On

BY JOEL JACKSON



**SUPERINTENDENT OF  
LAKE OMIGOSH GOLF  
CLUB AIMS TO FIND  
A WAY IN THESE  
DIFFICULT TIMES**

all pull together to bring more people to the game and make sure it's inclusive and not exclusive. Because, quite frankly, we can't afford not to.

Old habits are hard to break, but it's those clubs that get innovative with tee times and clinics for ladies, juniors and beginners who will reap the rewards when the economy gets moving again — and it will. And for the new golfers, the reward will be developing social and business networking, physical activity, enjoyment of the outdoors and learning the skills of a game they can play for a lifetime.

As Duffy was discussing some of his cost-cutting ideas, he also mentioned he noticed my column in *Golfdom* had changed from "Shades of Green" to "From the Back Tees." I said to him, "Well, what do you think of the new name?" Not missing a beat, Duffy, who has played more than a few rounds of golf with me said, "You have no business being on the back tees, Jackson. You can't hit the ball out of your shadow." I said, "Duffy, that's not true unless you're saying I cast a 180- to 200-yard shadow."

Friends, I may not be long, but when I'm on the back tees I can see the whole course. Usually, I can't reach those fairway bunkers and hazards, so I stay out of trouble and hopefully help the team in a scramble, sorta like the one we're in now.

However, I promise that if we ever really tee it up together, I will play from the white or gold tees so I won't hold you up. But I want strokes. By the way, my handicap is a 2 — woods and irons.

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*Certified Golf Course Superintendent Joel Jackson retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*