

A NEW PROGRAM: SCALE IT BACK!



By Seth Jones

Before I get on my soapbox, I'd like to thank our sponsor, The Toro Co., for again making *Golfdom's* Putting Greens Special a reality. We enjoy making this supplement, and I hope it shows.

Each issue of *Golfdom* has a few personal highlights for me. Some issues are better than others when it comes to the highlights. But most happen when I'm out in the field. I'm usually somewhere nice, meeting with a superintendent, on a beautiful golf course.

But one of the highlights of this issue happened while I was seated at my computer. It was the moment I clicked a link and discovered that in only three business days, I was given 704 survey responses from you, our readers.

I included two open-ended questions in the putting greens survey, which asked respondents to write a short answer. The questions were, "What will be your biggest challenge in maintaining greens in the next five years?" and "What has been the biggest innovation in greens management in the last five years?"

I got 670 and 656 responses, respectively. Many of the answers were fascinating.

I'd like to thank whomever it was who shot me the line, "It takes

green to keep them green." You, sir or madam, gave me the title for the results of our putting greens survey, which begins on page S10. I owe you a beer. (But if over the course of the rest of the year I find myself buying 50 different people a beer, all taking credit for that phrase, I'll know I'm a sucker.)

Many respondents wrote that golfers still expect the same results on the golf course even though maintenance budgets across the country have been slashed.

I get it — you don't do more with less. You do less with less.

I played at Falcon Ridge Golf Course in Lenexa, Kan., recently. It's a beautiful course with splendid views. Superintendent Paul Gunderman and his crew do a heck of a job out there. After the round, I stopped in the restroom, where I saw my regular USGA/PGA public service announcement on the bulletin board. This time it was hosted by PGA Tour star Dustin Johnson. Johnson was asking me, the below-average golfer, to Tee it Forward.

Done and done, D.J. It's my

pleasure to Tee it Forward. I recognize that the back tees, and often the blue tees, are not for me.

Johnson and his message got me thinking about this survey and our problem on the maintenance side of the game: a disregard for the fact that maintenance budgets are half of what they used to be.

That's when it occurred to me: Forget Tee it Forward. How about "Scale it Back?"

Let's make a public service announcement — maybe we can get new industry favorite David Feherty to be our spokesperson, but I'd take Weird Al Yankovic in a pinch — and remind golfers that the greens they're putting were maintained with less labor, more water restrictions, worse weather and fewer inputs, than they've seen in years.

Instead of a chart that shows me, according to the distance of my average drive, how long a golf course I should play, how about a chart that shows golfers what the maintenance budget was five years ago compared to today? Include how big the crew was from then to now. While you're at it, throw in the average cost of a gallon of gas.

Golfers, you know you need to Scale it Back!

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