

To Open Or Not to Open . . .

Are you open yet? When are you going to open? These two questions are to be highlighting the conversations of superintendents and anxious golfers in the near future. With the subject matter close at hand, I decided to do some research to find some guidelines for the spring opening of golf courses.

The first step I took was to hit the Turf Books, unfortunately I found little or no direct information on the subject.

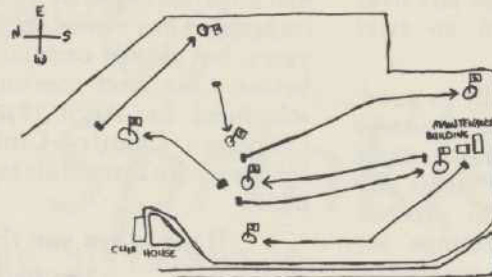
The second step I took was to ask about a dozen fellow superintendents and there was my answer. Each superintendent has his own way of determining when to open, but there are several common grounds, namely:

1. When the frost is out.
2. When green surfaces are firm enough so that tracking is not a problem.
3. When conditions are so that no damage will be done to the course.



Each superintendent is as unique as the golf course at which he is employed and each superintendent uses his own expertise and experience to make this sometimes politically explosive decision.

Several courses have set up alternatives to the normal openings. Reversing the course is a popular solution. By that I mean cups are cut in the fall, in the tee-off areas and tee markers are set in a level area off to the side of the green. Golfers then play the course in reverse using the tee-offs as



Pine Hills

TEMPORARY TUNE-UP
GOLF COURSE

1	2 GREEN TO 2 TEE	388 yds	PAR 4
2	1 GREEN TO 1 TEE	343 yds	4
3	PRACTICE TEE TO 9 TEE	225 yds	4
4	6 GREEN TO 6 TEE	290 yds	4
5	5 GREEN TO 4 GREEN	148 yds	3
6	4 GREEN TO 4 TEE	497 yds	4
7	3 GREEN TO 3 TEE	510 yds	5
TOTAL		2341 yds	28

PLEASE

KEEP-OFF PERMANENT GREENS

TEE BETWEEN MARKERS

USE EXTRA CAUTION

AND CARE FOR COURSE

temporary greens. If your course layout and terrain lends itself to this practice it might be well worth the effort. This practice not only buys time for the regular greens to be ready for play but temporarily appeases the anxious golfers.

Here at Pine Hills the course layout does not allow me to follow this practice to the letter so I have taken the practice one step further. I have set up a seven hole course, called the Pine Hills Temporary Tune-Up Golf Course. I have included a map and score card which I composed for this purpose. I use our regular tee-offs as the greens where it is feasible. Where the terrain does not lend itself, I have been painting temporary greens with Vitalon Dark. I, too, reverse the holes from their norm, thereby avoiding the temptation of the golfers to use the regular green. This practice has been very well received by the membership, especially the green paint.

THE END OF THE STORY:

When the question to open or not comes up, each individual must decide what is best for his own situation. The decision may be unpopular to the golfer but with proper explanation or alternatives mutual satisfaction can be reached.

It helps greatly to communicate your guideline for course openings to the membership either through an article in your club's newsletter, or an open letter to the golfers hung in your Pro Shop or locker room, or any other means of communication which you may have at your disposal.

Rodney Johnson

Superintendent, Pine Hills Country Club, Sheboygan