



Drinking Water on the Golf Course

By Monroe S. Miller

Rodney and I never have any trouble thinking of a question for the survey. We try to narrow our choice to a topic of interest among all of us, whether it is a problem or merely a curiosity.

We chose drinking water as a subject. The choice this time may be a little bit selfish because each of us is mildly aggravated by the time providing drinking water to golf players is starting to consume.

Both of us have noticed an increase in the demand for water. Players are nearing the demand for water on every tee. They want it ice cold. They want it fresh at least once a day.

Hand pumps and wells, once quite commonly seen on Wisconsin golf courses, are losing favor. Soon, the old Baker "Monitors" will be gone because:

- 1) "the water isn't cold;"
- 2) "it's too much work;" and
- 3) "the well might be contaminated."

The latter is a concern to superintendents, too. To relieve such fears, water testing becomes necessary. It's getting a little too involved.

What started out with a single cooler in a somewhat central locale has mushroomed. For some of us, it is taking 20 man hours a week to satisfy this demand. The small 4 oz. cups provided at each cooler frequently aren't large enough; they are bringing 12 oz. and 16 oz. cups from the clubhouse with them.

And more than one golf course superintendent has wondered how a 10 gallon Igloo cooler could be empty at 2 p.m. when it was full at 9 a.m. and yet there are only a dozen cups in the waste container. Wondered, until he saw a player on the next tee soaking a bath towel with water from the cooler.

The complaining from players is aggravating, but not nearly as much as having to send an employee back to the golf course on Saturday and Sunday afternoons — to fill coolers. That's aggravating because there are employees on the property already —

clubhouse and pro shop employees. But, for us at least, filling coolers "isn't their job." So we send someone in, at overtime pay and usually for a three hour minimum, to fill the _____ coolers.

Familiar to you? Understanding why we chose this subject?

I'm using the word "subject" instead of "question" because we asked our colleagues three questions. Those questions were:

1. Number of locations where a player can get a drink of water. **DO NOT COUNT THE CLUBHOUSE; A SINGLE COOLER SERVING TWO TEES COUNTS AS ONE LOCATION.**

2. What are the sources of the water — fountains, bubblers (well), coolers?

3. Who is responsible for the coolers?

THE RESULTS

Twenty golf course superintendents were interviewed. Here's what we learned.

1. Locations: The average number of locations was five. The range was from two locations to seven locations where water was available. Also, remember we did NOT include the clubhouse. Many of those interviewed pointed out that the location of the water was strategic so players from two or more holes were served by that single location. For example, the location of the shelter at Maple Bluff covers either the green or tee of eight holes. The Bluff and Quit-Quit-Oc each reported just two locations. Cherokee reported seven and four courses responded with six locations.

It would appear that water is available at either the tee or green of most golf holes on those courses surveyed.

2. Sources: Coolers are the most common source of drinking water on the 20 courses surveyed. Each one averaged three coolers although two golf courses didn't have any because they depended on bubblers or fountains.

Most courses had a mix of sources and all but four had bubblers and fountains. Carl Grassl at Blue Mound has

all piped water. Butte Des Morts doesn't use coolers, either. Nakoma, West Bend, Quit Qui Oc and Bull's Eye depend exclusively on the Igloo coolers.

3. Responsibility: On all but three of the courses in this survey, the golf course superintendent was responsible for providing the water. In two cases, the clubhouse staff were required to take care of the coolers. The pro shop handled these duties in the other instance.

This is the question Rod and I had hoped for different results. But we conclude it makes too much sense having either the pro shop or clubhouse handle these duties and, therefore, they don't. Tom Harrison doesn't return to the course on weekend afternoons to fill coolers with ice or water; he simply places spare coolers (filled) at that location (a double tee with three Igloo ten-gallon coolers and three spares!) before leaving in the morning. The saving in labor (and aggravation) quickly pays for the spares.

That does make sense.

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