



# GOLF COURSE FEVER

By Pat Norton

Right now I'm parked in front of the television set watching the Tournament Players Championship and I'm starting to shake. Pretty soon I'll be sweating and eventually mumbling to myself. I'm looking at that beautiful TPC course at Sawgrass—challenging Pete Dye design, lots of water and Florida sunshine so warm I can feel the heat coming right through the TV set.

Now I'm starting to drool. I get out my note pad and feverishly begin taking notes. My ten month old son, Tommy, looks up at me as if to say, "what's wrong with you, Pops?"

Well, I'll tell you what's wrong, friends. I'm getting a bad case of the "fever". The only difference is that for myself and thousands of other "turf addicts", this is not the normal fever. This strain is known as "golf course fever".

Type G, or common "golf fever", is the affliction affecting millions of Americans each spring. It builds slowly, with symptoms worsening as network coverage of the PGA Tour progresses during the months of March and April.

Symptoms of this fever include constant talk of golf, impulsive buying of golf equipment, and endless visits to the local PGA professional. If the superintendent has the misfortune to be present when these fever stricken souls wander into the golf shop, things usu-

ally go from bad to worse.

Then begins the litany of innocent, misguided questions: When will the course be opening? How much winter-kill did we have on the golf course? What about these new prices and policies for 1992?

My personal favorites are the left field suggestions for improvement of the golf course. Recently a member asked me if we could build a practice green and sand bunker area.

"Great idea," I said.

Then she asked if we could remove a target green to enhance vision from the range tees.

"Not a great idea," I said.

The conversation ended when I suggested that she approach the managing owner of Cedar Creek with her ideas. If he approves any funding, I'll eat my hat. These suggestions are always so simple in their minds.

Type T fever, or "golf course fever", is much more rare, but no less intense. Its symptoms do include the shaking, sweating, mumbling and drooling mentioned earlier. Similarly, it is characterized by wild thoughts of course modifications and improvements triggered by the visual feast of Augusta National seen at its most pristine. These thoughts tend to build into a virtual improvement frenzy, each idea better, and more ex-

pensive, than the previous one. This fever continues all spring, sometimes raging, sometimes smoldering, in one's mind.

Type T fever differs in that I couldn't care less who wins the weekly tour event. I'm glued to the tube to see the golf course, not the golfing. Show me those mowing patterns, those retaining walls and the exotic plantings. Give me a gander at those greens and fairways from the MetLife blimp—that's what we Type T sufferers want to see.

And who the heck cares about playing golf at this exciting time of the year, anyway? Playing golf in the spring only serves to ruin the experience of being out on the course and enjoying it!

As springtime warms into summer, Type T fever begins to cool off. Real world limitations, namely money and weather, bring on the realization that it's not all possible this year. Some of these great ideas may never be implemented. Improvements, especially on a public golf course, always need to be justified.

Solace is taken in the projects that do come to fruition. Small improvements become huge, at least in the superintendent's mind. Ideas fade into obscurity as other priorities emerge.

Better, improved variations of these ideas will reemerge when the fever begins to heat up again. Next spring.

## Answers to the WISCONSIN GOLF COURSE QUIZ from page 30.

1. *False.* About 5% of Wisconsin soils are organic (peat or muck). Amendments generally aren't available because of a lack of economic incentive in the past to develop the harvest, preparation, packaging, storage and marketing facilities. Although that can change, the reality is that wetlands and bogs are likely to become even more difficult to develop, either for agricultural or commercial purposes.
2. 70 pounds! No wonder peat is a favored amendment for what is normally very droughty-sand.
3. Silt.
4. Nitrogen is not part of a routine soil test.
5. 6.5.
6. Antigo silt loam.
7. Muck.
8. Perched water table.
9. About one third of the soil area of Wisconsin comes from glacial outwash sand and gravel, and another one third of the soil area of the state comes from glacial till loam. This says a lot about the influence of ice on our soils!
10. A *gimmee*—O. J. Noer of Stoughton, Wisconsin.