



What's So Great About Autumn?

By Rob Schultz

I've always had a problem with those smiley, radiant charmers who let out a big sigh every September and say "Autumn, it's my favorite time of year."

I hear it in the office. I hear it at home. I hear it on the radio and when I watch the happy talkers who read us the news every night on television. You know, the pseudo-news types with the perfect hair who need to make the transition from the news portion of the telecast to the weather and one anchor will say to the other, "Autumn, it's my favorite time of year."

My response has always been the same: "What is wrong with all those people? What's so great about Autumn?"

Autumn means holes in greens. Every year, on the day following Labor Day, every grounds crew at every golf course in North America pulls out those godawful aerifying machines that ruin greens. Then, to make matters worse, they pour dirt and gravel on the greens.

Yeah, I know the process eventually improves the greens. Somebody always tries to explain that to me while I'm going into convulsions after my four-foot birdie putt dives left when it hits one of those pebbles. Then, for an explanation point, they always add, "It's just part of Autumn. It's my favorite time of year."

My response is always the same. I aerify their putter with my golf shoes. I tell them it'll eventually improve their games.

Autumn means shorter days. You can't tee off before noon because of frost. And if you don't tee off by 2 p.m., you won't finish your round. That means 1,000 golfers who play my course every day have a 2-hour window in which to tee off.

Every year I play my best round of golf in Autumn. It takes me all year to remember how to swing a golf club. Then winter comes and I have to start all over again. Anyway, I'm usually even par sometime in late October when I get bogged down behind a slow foursome. I nervously glimpse at my watch and wonder if I'll finish before Orion rises.

It never happens. I trudge off the course frustrated and head for my car in the parking lot when I run into the slow-some that played ahead of me. As I pass by, one of them will always say, "Aah Autumn, it's my favorite time of year."

Autumn means wind-chill readings, leaves so thick you can't find your golf ball, crusty, hard greens, snow, commercials by sleazy politicians and 10 more losses by the Green Bay Packers. Ball washers, signs, soda machines, benches and pins are all fair game to the little teenagers from hell who think ruining a golf course is great fun.

I always wondered about the mind-set of those goofy teens who wreck golf courses. I can just see them sitting around the basement of one of their parents' homes determining the game plan.

"Whatcha want to do tonight?" asks one delinquent.

"Let's smash some pumpkins or play mailbox baseball." says another.

"I got it," says a third dimwit, whose entire education has come from walking the malls and playing video machines. "Let's go razor blade the greens at the golf course. Yeah, that'll be great. I get a big kick out of blind destruction. And let's steal some pins and ball washers. I always wanted a ball washer in my room. I can use it for...er...something. And while we're at it, let's scope out the place for pine trees so I can go back in December and get our Christmas tree."

Another says, "How exciting. It's almost as great as when we stole that old lady's purse and shoved her down on the ground or when we closed that locker door on that straight-A student's hand and broke it."

The other guys start giggling and laughing. They all look like some creation from a Lon Chaney movie. Call it Frankenstein vs. Dracula vs. The Teenagers With A Combined IQ of 22.

The deadbeats pull nylons over their heads and take off for the local links. As they trudge off into the night, one will always say, "Autumn, it's my favorite time of year."

They almost never get caught. When they do, the courts never punish them. Said the judge, "They were just having some fun. At least they weren't selling crack to the neighborhood kids."

If I was the judge I's sentence the kids to 10 years of cutting and laying sod at the local public course. They would put their green-slicing talents to good use. Then, I'd sentence them to 50 more years in the pen, or, since they like the fall so much, until they are in the "Autumn of their lives."

I must admit I can find some pleasure in Autumn. The trees are pretty, road construction ends and there's something comforting about playing golf in a sweater. But the positives don't come close to outweighing the negatives.

I'll take 80° over 50° any day. I'll take green leaves on the trees over red leaves on the ground. I'll take washing my ball in a ball washer over washing it with my spit. I'll take smooth greens over greens that look like pegboard.

Autumn? The best time of the year? Bah, humbug.

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