



Planning For *The Game*

By Chad Eberhardt

Planning for any phase of golf course management is important but planning for a particular event is vitally important.

The first time you take a look at your season schedule, you highlight an event as crucial. Whether you're hosting the city tournament or a PGA tour event, you know that everyone on your golf course team needs to be on the same page and at peak performance.

A golf year can be divided into pre-season, regular season, and post-season.

During the important pre-season period, when all phases of the game must be taught, I like to have the basic activities for each practice session completely mapped out. A written checklist of all phases is made out well in advance of our first game (Memorial Day weekend) so that nothing is left to chance.

The pre-season is an important time for the development of proper mental attitude. The mental attitude of the squad is just as important, and just as coachable, as are the fundamentals.

It is sometimes difficult for those members of the team who don't frequently get the glamour positions (green or fairway mowing) during regular season events to maintain good morale. But if a coach can convince each team member that he is a necessary part of the group, then, and only then, the job becomes easier.

As coach you must have a continued valuation of each team member, use every man as much as possible, and give him as much work in practice as possible.

Basic psychology tells us that a person must know that he is needed and belongs, and that that same person experience a certain degree of success for continued interest. Team morale is partly built on continued interest.

Since my goal is for every player to be on the same page for *the game*, then the pre-season goal ought to be to get them to open the same book.

Once the regular season begins, I use weekdays as practices for weekend games. Quality and efficiency gradually improve with each passing week as the team narrows in on the same page of the book.

With consistent progress we won't need a monumental effort to get the course ready for *the game*.

Consistent progress can only be attained as long as you never lower your expectations for your team.

You won't lose control of the team as long as they feel that they are working toward something. After all, they don't really want to let you down, and they won't give up on you unless you give up on them first.

During the regular season, I have realized the psychological value of "off days."

A day when the sun is shining, and the golf course doesn't need much attention is picked. An "off day" consists of basic morning chores followed by a general clean-up of the shopyard by everyone. We get someone to fire up the grill and prepare for a cookout.

After eating, everyone has the rest of the day off to do whatever they want. Usually they'll hang around and organize a pick-up basketball game for the rest of the day.

These "off days" come along unannounced. The veterans on the team can usually sense an "off day" in the making.

The team comes to practice the next day full of vigor. "Off days" help to combat fatigue and ready the team for the final drive to *the game*.

Once *the game* arrives, it is important that the players realize that their successful season of hard work and dedication can quickly be erased by taking *the game* too lightly.

The possibility of an upset increases drastically if players look past the fact that they will be performing in front of some of the harshest critics. The fans who will be golfing have seen and expect nothing short of perfect conditions.

Therefore, if you're coaching a strong team, don't let them get too comfortable with how successful they've been. Keep the specter of upset implanted firmly in the players' minds.

As long as everybody on the team stays on the same page, *the game* will be a very enjoyable and rewarding time for you, your players, and the fans.

Keep 'em focused...Coach! 🌿

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