



## TOURNAMENT TIME

By Monroe S. Miller

Some golf course superintendents love them; others loathe them. Then there are those who view golf tournaments as events that merely have to be dealt with as professionally as one can.

Count me in the first group. I'm of the mind that the excitement a tournament generates on our golf course makes all the planning and execution very much worthwhile. A well run, competitive tournament can be rewarding and fun.

Make no mistake. I don't consider "outings" golf tournaments. Outings, despite the fact that they make money all across Wisconsin, are too often disastrous for our golf courses. Few course superintendents can derive any pleasure from watching a group from "Joe's Auto Body" tear his course up with golfers who play once or twice a year and who drive carts anywhere they want. Some of us have wanted to offer bounties for some of these "guests".

But amateur golf tournaments are radically different. The competition isn't sullied by money; players are driven by love of the game and that old fashioned spirit of competition.

I hold to an increasingly outmoded

view in America these days that every worker ought to take pride in what he does, whether that happens to be raking sand bunkers or running a corporation.

My experience is that a tournament provides a perfect venue to heighten and amplify an attitude among our crew members of pride—pride in their workmanship.

It is also a great opportunity to express an enthusiasm for excellence. You hope kids carry it with them for the rest of their lives. I even hope their enthusiasm for excellence might rub off on some other members of our society.

One's own experiences in youth often shape adult attitudes. Although I did not work on a golf course or have the chance to experience tournament time while I was young, I did belong to 4-H. The projects I chose offered similar opportunities, however.

Preparing an animal for show or a crop for display or yield at a fair was my "tournament" back then. Getting ready for a fair required careful advance planning, a lot of work and the desire to come out with a blue ribbon.

And it didn't matter whether the planning was for a local community

fair, the county fair or even the state fair. The emotions were all the same.

That's the way it is with tournament time, too.

It hasn't seemed to matter if we are planning for the Madison City Women's Tournament, the City Men's Tourney, the Club championship or the WSGA State Amateur. We go about them about the same and the feelings generated by each are similar.

For the players in any tournament, at that moment, it's the most important event, kind of a U.S. Open, Masters and PGA all wrapped up in one.

Last year we hosted the Women's Western Golf Association's National Juniors Tournament. Clear to anybody watching the week long competition was the seriousness of the players. You could see it on their faces. You could see it when they practiced. It was a big league event for them, the "big dance".

And it was for us, too. As is so often the case, an event like this one is the focus for the whole year. The challenge is to have everything come together at once for the best competition possible. It was fun last year when, on the Saturday before the tournament,

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the Green Committee Chairman at our Club cornered me on the course. He was bursting with pride because he could feel the anticipation of the tournament.

"The course has a 'mystical feeling'," he said to me. His words were music to my ears.

He wasn't the only one enjoying the atmosphere created by a golf tournament. Although some will always prefer not giving up their course for anything, most feel otherwise. Tournaments are good for golf and most players want what is good for the game.

I've also noticed a tournament that involves planning and arrangements by our members adds a lot to the spirit around the Club. It brings diverse groups together and seems to give a lot of them great satisfaction.

Over the years I have also discovered that often the "crowd" following a tournament consists of a lot of our own members. That proves that players are fans, too, and enjoy watching tournaments on their own course.

At no time, I've observed, are department heads more focused on the same point. During normal club days, we three have our own responsibilities

and problems that fully occupy our days. At tournament time, all efforts are ultimately put into the event. Camaraderie is never higher among us.

I know I am not alone in my emotions about tournaments. I have watched more than a few tournament rounds over the years with colleagues, very much enjoying the role of a golf fan.

Superintendents who travel many miles to see a U.S. Open or to play in the GCSAA's annual golf tourney like them, too.

Any friend or fellow superintendent who has gone to the Masters called that tournament 'the ultimate sporting event'. Need any more evidence that golf course superintendents make good golf tournament fans?

By the final round of the four day WWGA tournament we hosted last summer, the young guys on our staff were tired. So were Chad and Dave and I. The good thing about the last day of competition was that the split shifts were over.

On this day, by ten o'clock a.m. or so, everyone was free to go home and relax or sleep or do whatever.

But not one of them left. The picture that will always be with me is of 15 or

16 of those young people walking down from the shop toward the golf course. Their mood couldn't have been happier; the joking and horsing around made that clear.

Despite their weariness, they were heading out to follow the leaders from the seventh hole on. They wanted to see who was going to win the tournament they had put so much into.

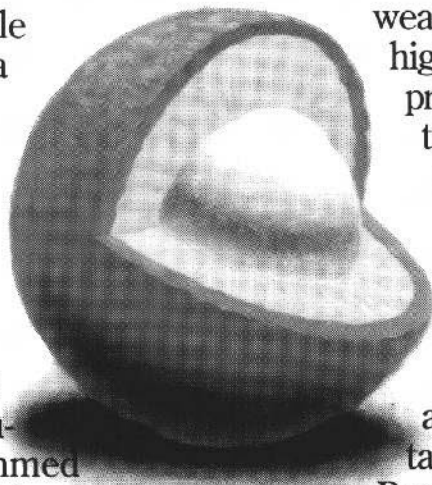
You couldn't mistake them, either. The black golf caps and white club shirts told one and all who they were. More than a few others following the tournament recognized that—competitors, members, media—and commented on a job well done by them. I couldn't have been more proud, of them and the job they had done.

So we are pretty excited around here, anticipating the color and competition and thrill of another big event this summer. We've worked hard to make sure the course is as good as it can be. Now we are wrapping up details, waiting for the big week to get here.

And anticipating the rush we know we will all get from tournament time! 🍷

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