



# The Sounds Of Fairway Mowers Are Whirring In My Head

By Rob Schultz

*Memo to the golf course grounds crews around the state:*

What's wrong with this sequence of sentences?

- A beautiful cardinal singing his sweet music on the branches of a birch tree overlooking the green.
- A white tail deer trotting out of the woods to forage in the rough.
- The wind whispering through the pines.
- The sun rising above the nearby hills or lakes.
- Some clueless kid riding a greens-mower—with the throttle open wide—that is so close to a foursome trying to putt that it drips oil on their golf balls.

For those of you who answered that the last sentence doesn't belong with the first four sentences, congratulations, you just graduated from the Sports Page School of Golf Course Etiquette, Class 101.

Unfortunately, and I know this for a fact, there are several of your crew members out there who just flunked. You read those five sentences and said, "Yup, that's life on a golf course."

I've said at least 1,000 times that superintendents and their crews are the most overworked, underpaid,

underappreciated group in the golf business.

I also know that today's golf courses demand more care than any other time in the history of the game. All hell can break loose if the fairways aren't cut correctly, if the greens don't register a 10 on the stimpmeter, if there's a weed in the rough. Golfers demand too much of you and the bottom line is that you have to spend more time on the course than in the past years.

But with alarming frequency this season, I've had rounds interrupted by grounds crews that completely ignore the fact that there are golfers lurking out there with them on the course. Fairway and greens mowers don't seem to stop anymore. It has gotten to the point where I don't even dare ask anybody to cut their engines, let alone to stop moving so I can concentrate. It has gotten that bad.

I sometimes feel that you're taking out your anger—that was created by working such a lousy summer—on the golfers.

I yearn for the days when the man, or woman, mowing the fairways would cut his engines to allow a foursome to hit its shots past him, or her, and then wave a smile when everyone walked past.

I used to chuckle whenever that happened because I always tried to figure out what that man, or woman, was thinking.

"What a bunch of hackers," he, or she, was probably saying to him, or her, self.

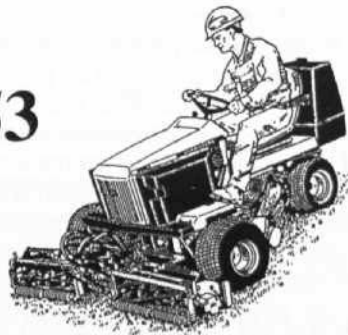
It's not that I haven't encountered any acts of kindness from a member of a grounds crew this year. In May, as I attempted to play The Bear at Grand Traverse in Traverse City, Michigan, a woman on a tractor hollered at me to stop licking my golf ball because some nasty fertilizer had just been sprayed on the greens. It was a swell gesture.

And there have been plenty of others. It's just...it's just that a golf course grounds crew is a lot like an umpire crew in baseball. The best crews are the ones that nobody knows are around. The only times anybody mentions them is when they have something to complain about. It's a no-win situation.

But at least you can enjoy working outside in the beautiful environment that a golf course provides. Birds chirping, deers foraging, the wind whispering through the pines. It's a great life.

Please let the golfers enjoy it, too. ♣

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