



## Winter – Not My Favorite Season

By Pat Norton

I don't know about you all, but winter is definitely not my favorite season. I do not enjoy ice fishing or snowmobiling at all; hockey skating is beyond my coordination level, and cross country skiing is a thing of the past for a young father who isn't getting any younger. And it's always too damn cold, too windy, too icy—it's a season of too many extremes. So if I had to rank the seasons, winter places a distant fourth.

Winter is OK from a family point of view, which means that Dad spend a lot of time providing child care so than Mom can take a break now and then. My child care, by the way, consists of endlessly playing "Disney" videos and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, giving baths and yelling at the kids.

Professionally, I despise winter. I hate it. I can't stand it, especially once the holidays are history. After that, it drags. Any golf course superintendent who enjoys being in the shop or at the clubhouse day after day, week after week, is totally nuts!

Can anyone really derive professional satisfaction from putting up Christmas decorations, shoveling sidewalks, repairing bathrooms, installing shelves, cleaning chairs, shampooing carpets, or changing light bulbs? Are these the reasons that we all gravitated toward this profession? The last time that I checked, neither the WGCSA or the GCSAA has ever sponsored any educational offering on clubhouse maintenance—so why do our employers assume that we know all about it? It must be that we are all just blessed with loads of overall talent, craving to put that talent to use up at the clubhouse...

Fortunately, I'm not directly involved in most of those chores, but I do my share to help out when needed. Which is seemingly too often. I help out because I consider myself a team player. I try not to have a 'prima donna' attitude, unlike some other employees. The 'not my job' attitude really annoys me—people appreciate a good attitude

toward performing the many mundane tasks in the workplace.

Every so often, though, the limits of cooperation need to be stated loud and clear. "Take care of it yourself," I'll boldly state, especially when asked to manually pressure wash out the dumpsters!!

So just what is the deal with all of these winter loving superintendents? Got a real itch to spend the next four months indoors painting tee markers? Or is it just the lure of snow shoveling until you can't stand straight anymore?

It seems that every fall superintendents breath a collective sigh of relief that the golf season is over! Is the golf season that torturous? "Whew, I'm glad that's over. Now I'm looking forward to—what?"

Bitter cold, bitter winds, dark days, darker nights, being indoors always, pale, white skin...Oh joyful days! Can't wait for the fun to begin! Sign me up, before it's too late!

Gentlemen, let's not kid ourselves. Winter is the pits, and we all secretly hate it with a passion. Hey, call me a fool, but being out on the course as much as possible is our reason for being! Spring, summer and fall are really great. Winter just sort of stinks. It drags on...forever.

Winter here at "the Creek" consists of reducing or eliminating spending, working without employees, endless discussions of "possible" course renovations, and snow removal until that white stuff makes me depressed just to look at it.

My priority—the golf course—does not match the club's winter priorities. They are geared up for the holidays, so it's not until January has passed that anyone thinks about the next golf season. "Oh, yeah, I guess that the big open space outside is a golf course, isn't it? Is there anything we need to do?"

Remarkable it is that there's such a casual attitude toward our winter work. And no amount of explanation, justification or rationalization is ever enough

to make people realize that our winter days do not consist of "playing cards down in the shed." My poker playing disability can attest to that!

So what does a winter hating Wisconsin golf course superintendent do to tolerate "the dark months"? I pretend to like it! I pretend that going to work in the dark and freezing my butt off is a character building experience. I pretend that I'm just about the best darn snowplow operator in this county, when I know full well that the rankings show me right down there near the bottom. And I feign interest in clubhouse happenings. "Gee, only \$5,000 to redesign that dinner menu again—what a bargain!"

On the brighter side, consider the great weather that Ma Nature gave us during November and early December. No Halloween snowstorms, no ice storms so far, and pleasant working conditions outside in December. It's been great. I hope that it lasts all winter.

And winter shop work isn't really too bad—if it's golf course related. Reels and bedknives, packing bearings, and painting trash baskets—a gala annual event!! Restaining those thirty benches gives me a real thrill!!

Winter really is great! It's a blast! Better than summer by a bunch...If only I can continue to delude myself for the next four months, I'll have survived another winter as a Wisconsin golf course superintendent. 🍷

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