



TOP TEN

By Pat Norton

A list of ten personal pet peeves about this golfing world that we all inhabit—identify with them if you can. No original idea here, just a very transparent copy of Letterman's TOP TEN with a golf twist to keep things interesting and pertinent.

No. 10 – HOURS The long, grinding hours necessary to keep the course looking good are tough to take at this point in the season. Chris, my neighbor across the street, works for Commonwealth Edison. He returns home daily at 4:00 p.m., so I hear, has weekends off, has about twenty-five weeks annual vacation...so it seems. He really seems not to have any worries, which is about right...he works a normal job and lives in a normal world!

No. 9 – SHOT ROUTINE The public golfer/hacker shot routine...is that humorous series of motions and gyrations that golfers do as they ready themselves before each shot attempt. He takes one, then two, sometimes three practice swings...clenches the club like a weapon of war...the innocent ball IS his worst enemy...by now the entire golf course crew is lined up behind me waiting courteously for this fine fellow TO HIT THE DAMN BALL ALREADY...finally he chops at the ball, hits it hard and fast down the right field line...slices it foul and watches it sail OB.

Since he has no concept of The Rules of Golf, he proceeds up the hole, takes no penalty stroke, but maybe a mulligan, and continues on his way. I motion everybody through...the crew scoots on by, rolling their eyes and darn near laughing out loud.

Because this happens all day, every day, it can be quite maddening. But, it's also very funny and extremely predictable.

No. 8 – BAD CLOTHING What happens on a public course is that you really get a mixed bag of people and a mixed bag of golf attire. The AM seniors wear their flamboyant pants

and Panama hats, and the good golfers wear nice shorts and golf shirts.

The weekend warriors, however, are a breed apart. These trendsetters lean towards cutoff jeans/short athletic shorts, tube athletic socks, and white golf shoes with those cool fringed flaps. The outfit is topped off with a gorgeously striped men's tank top.

We now have a pseudo dress code that prohibits men's tank tops. So after we get their green fee and get them comfortable, we inform them of the rule. They usually end up slipping into a sporty dark, dark green "Nettle Creek" T-shirt that is loaned to them.

What a difference! What an improvement! What a nice, dark colored shirt to be wearing on a humid, 92 degree Illinois day. I suppose it is asking too much that these guys check a mirror before leaving for the course??

No. 7 – IN THE WAY Known as the "right-in-the-way" or "15 degree" rule. The premise here is that most public golfers are notorious for not hitting the ball until they're absolutely positive that course workers are within 15 degrees to either side of their correct line of flight. Then, let it fly, baby! Nobody knows where that little egg is going, so stay alert!

So many times I've wanted to grab a guy by the throat and beller "Hey, fella, there's a living, breathing person

on this end!!! Now I'm gonna pull out my driver, fire a few shots back atcha and watch you run for cover, you dumb bunny!"

If these idiots could wait for maybe 20-30 seconds, we'd be out of harms way. But no...they're in such a hurry that common courtesy is totally forgotten.

The other half of this problem is the rookie course employee. "Am I in the way here?? How about over here a few feet?? Hey, boss, that guy almost hit me right in the butt!"

The problem with most employee etiquette problems is that they happen in the distance—you are an observer, so by the time you arrive on the scene, Bluehair Betty is really upset and ready to vent on the man in charge. "Hey, boss, I didn't cause a problem for you back there, did I? Nobody told me about giving the golfers the 'right-of-way'. I'm really sorry, dude!"

No. 6 – BRAIN DEAD MENTALITY Especially applies to riding golfers...I just love watching golfers maneuver their carts around the course. They'll practically leave the cart behind, then finally remember to walk back half a hole to retrieve it. "Hey, fella, we require that you get that cart a bit closer to that tee over there...so you won't need to walk hardly at all. Judging from your rotund physique, I'd say walking does go against your grain." Looks like

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most of these guys have never heard about the mental and physical benefits of walking the golf course.

The other half of being brain dead on a golf cart involves being transformed into a mini-tank commander/golf cart driver. In other words, these guys drive anywhere and everywhere...over greens, through flower beds, into the wildflower areas. "Need a few more minutes to trample down the entire wildflower bed as you search for Mr. Titlist?"

"No problem, friend! Look as long as you like, you lost puppy."

Brain dead for walking golfers involves a new ball retriever on the golf gadget market. Sold exclusively to seniors, it has about a 200 foot extension and comes with hip waders...now older linksters can really hold up play as they hunt for golf balls in our waters...most of these guys have about 10,000 golf balls already to their names. Heaven forbid that they should lose a few...here, buddy, take one of mine and get going...traffic is backed up for miles!!

No. 5 – EMPLOYEE SUMMER BAILOUT That annual phenomena that happens every August—summer employees have had quite enough of work for the summer, thank you very much, and are quite anxious to get back to the good life...school!! They are not looking back, and really don't know about working weekends this fall. Sounds too much like me just a few short years ago.

What an ungrateful attitude! Scarcely a "thank you" for teaching them about the wonderful world of golf course management—getting up way too early, staying way too late, working way too many weekends. Weren't we also the ones to instruct them in some valuable career skills—shoveling, weed whacking, and rake, rake, raking until their arms went numb? We should be receiving their applause, don't you think?

They can feel very good about their summer employment...maybe use it as 'the anecdote' as they explain to their children about the benefits of hard work..."When I was your age..." actually creeps into conversations with our children these days.

No. 4 – COURSE PROJECTS—FINISH 'EM They say that the mark of a good contractor is that he pays attention to detail and sticks with a project until the end. If that's so, I'd be a very average contractor. Too many unfinished projects...

I have a small projects list consisting of leftovers from summer's major course improvements...it needs completing by the end of September. Three and a half legal pages long, it's all seeding, sodding, trenching and general cleanup...by the end of September. I'll get grilled if it is not finished...by the end of September.

I guess I'll be looking for a new course somewhere...by the end of September.

No. 3 – POWERS THAT BE/STUPID REQUESTS Everybody likes to be the boss, nobody likes to follow orders. But, hey, I really thought that there weren't very many native Americans down here...but I am obviously WRONG! We have tons of 'chiefs' here at this course, and too few resources...

But, hey, I like following through on your stupid requests...that brush pile in the shopyard is totally ugly, an eyesore, and IS top priority. And yes, we'll bring our efforts to a new level in the aluminum can sorting department, Mr. Top Dog.

And finally, Mr. Rookie Course Owner, why is everybody else raving about beautiful playing conditions/constant course improvements while you can scarcely find a positive aspect on any of your frequent course tours? Could it be that you are a jerk and do not know of what you speak? Try walking in my shoes sometime...it's not as easy as you seem to think.

No. 2 – END OF NICE WEATHER, END OF SEASON Although I tend to bitch and complain too much, I really do love working at the golf course. Otherwise, I wouldn't be there so much. We're all addicted to our courses, I think...What I really dislike is winter. Spring, summer, and especially autumn are the best. Late autumn always finds me looking back, trying to remember when the temperature last broke 80 degrees. I usually cannot remember, which is either an indication of a poor memory or the end of the season.

No. 1 – MISTAKES AND HINDSIGHT I hate making mistakes. I hate it when employees make mistakes...especially when they've been taught otherwise. Here are a couple of examples of 'errorcitos' made in the heat of the battle in August '95:

(a) Confront is a great herbicide, but do not spray it out just before 95-100 degree weather is about to strike. Being too aggressive in ones actions

can lead to trouble...and that little bit of white clover is really very insignificant. Slid out of that little problem with help from a bit of Nutralene and some fortunately timed rainfalls.

(b) Fungicides really are great tools, and yes, interval recommendations should be closely followed, especially in extremely tough disease pressure situations. Stretching out the interval too much will really lead to problems, such as dollar spot/brown patch, the likes of which I'd never seen before. Hindsight then kicks in, as does the mental boot in the butt. I am now brought in as a consultant to help others identify these two diseases...I really know what they look like...

Well, there it is folks. A completely objective look at what ticks me off. I'll bet that there is some commonality there for all superintendents...

Actually, there are a few more things that make my blood boil on a daily basis...just ask my crew members. They actually told me the other day that observing me talking/cursing to myself as I inspect the course is really quite humorous. Do they respect me, or what?

Maybe I need to lighten up, go back out onto the course and watch the golfers tear up my golf course. That's always good for a few laughs. And that's what we all need right about now...a few laughs. 🍀

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