



An Incredible Love/Hate Relationship

By Pat Norton
Nettle Creek CC

I preface these remarks by first stating that all of us down here in JordanLand are really, truly, and totally enjoying the heck out of the NBA Finals between *our* Chicago Bulls and those Mormons from Utah. We transplanted Wisconsinites had to endure the humiliation of the Packers losing the Super Bowl back in January...in the middle of a totally anti-Packer group of guests...in our own home! So, in some twisted way, the Bulls winning the NBA this year...*for only the sixth time*...makes up for the Packer episode.

This remark also dates this column, which is being written on or about June 10, way beyond *The Grass Roots* deadline! For that, I have only myself to blame...and for all of you out there who consider yourself to be procrastinators...you are now reading the words of the king of all procrastinators!

The Packers and the Bulls, as we all know, are two great examples of sporting success and excellence. As we also all know and understand, one of the key ingredients of their success is certainly team talent.

Another element of a sporting career, or any other type of success, is the willingness to work hard and make necessary sacrifices in the quest for success...right? Isn't that what almost all of us believe as we

make our way through this life?

There were a lot of things that my father was not able to teach me during my years under their roof...but one value that definitely rubbed off on me from the paternal side was the idea of the strong work ethic. I can still clearly remember my Dad being generally supportive of my high school sporting activities...while insisting that all of us have part-time jobs also. I also remember the hay baling gigs that he used to get me into...usually much to my chagrin.

My best memories of those years were the many days spent golfing from about age 8 through until about age 22...lots of time for golf...and coincidentally, lots of time spent on golf courses!

Those teen years were the formative ones for all of us that now find ourselves in an occupation that requires quite a bit of hard work and sacrifice for the best three seasons of the year in the upper Midwest.

I'll bet that there's quite a bit of commonality amongst golf course superintendents in their journey from those early years of working life to the hectic lives in which we all find ourselves engrossed.

Which brings me to the point of this story. I am engaged in a bitter love/hate relationship. Better yet...we are all engaged in bitter love/hate

relationships. Some of us, myself probably most of all...are engaged in multiple love/hate relationships of varying types and degrees.

For example,

I love being a father...but sometimes resent the responsibility.

I love my wife dearly...but I know that at times she'd like to throttle me.

I love having some money...but hate people who love money too much.

By far the biggest and most encompassing love/hate relationship that I have is with the golf course.

In an honest moment, I'll admit that every golf course that I've ever worked at was a definite love/hate relationship. Thinking back on all of the great times at golf courses is easy to do...since people naturally wax nostalgic about the past. It's those nasty, hateful memories that need to be brought to the surface and mulled over in the mind in coming to grips with this fact.

While other people...the golfers that play here...consider the golf course to be their haven...their home course...I just shudder and wince. I shudder because once in awhile I feel the mild desire to grab somebody by the throat...usually one of our well-meaning, elderly volunteer



1830 Executive Drive
Oconomowoc, WI 53226

Don't let your equipment sit idle while you wait for engine parts! Depending on your needs, we will take care of you direct or help you find your local engine dealer. Let the engine experts help you!

We carry a full parts inventory. Ask for our parts department.



The Source for Power...
Worldwide™

414-567-8575 or 800-242-2289 (phone)

414-567-2256 or 800-897-8999 (fax)

HONDA
ENGINES



Kubota

LOMBARDINI

rangers as they stop me to give their version of how the golf course could be improved...aaahhh!!!

I wince because these innocent golfers and part-time workers have no idea how nasty...and how pain inflicting a golf course can be!!

Their only love/hate relationship is with the game of golf itself...which pales in comparison with the intense positives and negatives that are experienced by those of us in the golf business. See if you can spot yourself in the examples below:

- The tremendous amount of daily effort required to keep any golf course looking good...which translates into grueling long hours and endless hours at the old golf course...it's impossible to avoid.

- The great early AM feeling on a cool summer morning...things look good...*"the entire crew showed up on time today... and they even seem to know what they're doing"...*

- The incredible early morning or late evening beauty of a golf course either awakening for the day or settling down for the night. The evenings are especially great...and make me wish that I lived on a golf course.

- The incredible daily frustration of knowing that there's always too much to do...with a staff that requires lots of patience and training...resulting in problems and situations that could be avoided...if, if, if!!

- Golf course equipment that seems to have the ability to fail, break down, or generally misbehave with all too much regularity...resulting in problems and frustration that make too many days way too difficult! On the other hand...is there a choice?

If the new solenoid for our Multi-Pro 5200 comes in on a Friday...gets installed immediately...putting me back in action for fairway spraying just before a very busy upcoming weekend...there is no choice...another hard fought stretch of days coming up! Enjoy your weekend, Mr. Superintendent! It gets very old, doesn't it?

For all of these and other examples concerning the course itself...there are an equal number of interesting anecdotes concerning the operation of the clubhouse and the golf operation.

We of the outdoors tend to think of our problems as paramount, but the amount of pressure and work involved in operating a successful

public course goes way beyond the golf course itself.

When one considers all of the golf outings, leagues, tournaments, and especially weekend open play...it adds up to an extremely long week for our director of golf. He is putting in about 12 hours daily...including weekends. He is also much more involved with our marketing, sales, and revenue generation....dealing with the money adds a lot of pressure!

He has an extreme case of a love/hate relationship with our golf course...he rarely sees his young family until about 8PM. It's so bad for him that he really wants out...on his hateful days.

And I do not blame him one little bit. He is just like all of the great superintendents that I know...guys that start out as young men totally willing to make the time sacrifice needed to make things prosper...to make the public golf course percolate nicely! As time passes...the business that we all love begins to wear on us...and the hate starts to creep into the relationship.

Fortunately for me, it's about a 80/20 love/hate thing...otherwise I hope I'd have the wisdom to move on to something else. What keeps a golf person sane...at least for me...is the daily freedom to move about the property and have really quite a bit of authority on what happens on the golf course.

We're now in our fifth season of owning this place...so we know each other well enough to know and understand all of the policies and procedures necessary for our mutual existence. I do not go out on a limb without good reason...and our senior owners rarely...in fact only about twice per year...venture out and make their 'official' inspection of the golf course.

So life out here on the golf course ebbs and flows...resulting in good times and satisfaction most of the time...with the negative stuff kept to a minimum by a combination of the determination to succeed and a constant awareness that our prosperity on this little old golf course does depend on what the public golfer experiences when he is here for the day.

A large part of that golfing experience is the golf course itself. Another large part of that golfing experience is the treatment that they receive

from the golf staff. Both areas require lots of time, patience, and effort from all of us involved here.

In the end, we all feel fortunate to be able to bolster one another when things get tough. In this way, the love/hate relationship is kept in the proper perspective.

And truthfully...as with life itself...keeping the proper balance in your love/hate relationships on the golf course is probably the key to continued success.

There may come a day when I just don't want to continue doing this type of work...a feeling that it's time to move on to something else. That time will come when my love/hate relationship gets all out of whack and kilter...and forces me to the same crossroads that others have experienced.

The love/hate relationship within me...that force that lives within all of us...will tell me when it is time to consider an alternative.

For now though, the love/hate thing is controllable and in perspective...so I guess that means that I'll continue on with the 4:30-4:45AM daily risings from a warm and comfortable bed...usually bleary eyed and tired...and drag my butt out to the course...just so that I can greet the sunrise on my beautiful golf course. And isn't that just the nicest description of a lovely relationship that you've ever read? Or does it sound too hateful? ♣

Steuer
TURF FARM

Growers of
'Quality'
Bluegrass

Mineral & Peat

Pickup or Delivery
414-425-7767