



The Silent Observer

By Pat Norton
Nettle Creek CC

Is there enough humor in your life? Do you consider yourself to have a good sense of humor? Do you see the humor, satire, or irony that is abundantly evident in everyday life?

Mixed in with all of the work and frustration of managing a golf course lies a great deal of humor and general hilarity. There are situations all day long... especially on a public golf course...in which the golfer unknowingly finds himself to be the butt of the joke.

And the most humorous thing of all is that the entire while that golfers are out there flailing away...they are being

silently observed and judged by people who truly understand the game...

Absolutely nobody on the golf course knows that the greatest interpreter of body language, the greatest satirist, and the person with the most ironic sense of humor...is all wrapped up into one person...your silent partner on the course...your golf course superintendent!

Think about how many times over the years that you've observed humorous situations, expressions, and silent acts of mime as golfers battle it out on the golf course, waging war against the golf course...their golfing

partners...and most humorously... against themselves.

One of the ironies here is that...as the golfers wage these battles in their war to become better golfers...there is an interested observer. Any superintendent or assistant superintendent who doesn't check out the golfers...all day long...is missing all of the fun!

The irony is that golfers have no idea that we're watching them all day long...we blend into the course, you see...and to them we're pretty much part of the golfscape. We also get to see them in different situations during their round and our travels over the



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course...so by the time they're finishing their round...we've formulated a pretty good idea as to their golfing ability and attitude towards the game.

The other irony is that almost all of the time the contact between golfer and superintendent is visual and mental...but not verbal. We get to observe golfers at play...reacting to what we see by forming a mental opinion of the hilarity or the impressiveness of any given pre-shot...actual golf swing... or post-shot routine.

Are we then allowed to burst out laughing or otherwise react verbally? Of course not! So the mental reaction...in which the humorously sharp superintendent starts to talk to himself...and laugh silently as he moves on...is the method of self communication.

The body language of golfers is the stuff of legendary tales...but for us it's body language/english all day long...from long and short range.

For me...long range body language observation is the best...watching some guy digging in on the tee like it's a rope pull...forearms clenched to the maximum...legs spread way too wide...flailing that driver like a war-club...chunking out that megadivot...and stomping off all upset with himself.

Think about it...we're always waiting for golfers for one reason or another, aren't we? So the natural thing to do is to observe the golfer hit the ball before we move through the mini-zone of their foursome and get out of their way! Sometimes we wait for only one guy to flail away...and then sometimes it's fun to watch the entire group...the assorted different swings...different golf attire...and different attitudes towards the game.

Check out these real situations that come to my mind and identify with golfers at your own course...

The automatic mulligan...in which the golfer swings ignorantly at the ball...then in a continuous motion has his hand in his pocket for his mulligan ball...and then hesitates and stops...because he's not sure if his partners are going to grant him an extra shot...they don't say a thing so he withdraws his hand nonchalantly! I really want to walk up on the tee and say something to the effect of 'Hey guys, give this poor dog a mulligan...he really, really needs one'. Instead, I just chuckle to myself and cruise away.

The everpresent cigar...a la Larry

Lioretti...we have one new member who constantly has one of these foot long cigars sticking out of his face. Admittedly, I'm not much of a cigar or cigarette fan, but some guys do look better than others smoking a stogie. Suffice it to say that this somewhat small, slimly built man seems overwhelmed by the size of the tobacco stick that he just always has to have when golfing. I feel sorry for his poor girlfriend or wife...not only is she a

golf widow...but has to deal with all of that breath when the guy finally does get home from the course!

The long hitter syndrome...in which just everybody out there is afraid to hit the ball because...ooooooooohhhh those golf course worker guys are in my way again...don't they know how good I am???

I really, really think that I'd better wait and make him feel like he'd better get out of my way...he's in my

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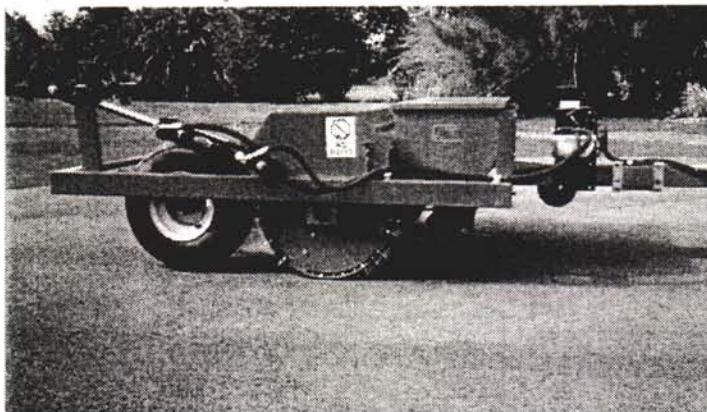
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range, you know...while on the receiving end the superintendent worker guy is saying to himself...just hit the ball, Grandma Graf...you can't possibly hit me out here...I'm 400 yards away from you...I'm out here every day dodging golf balls...and generally I've got a pretty good idea of how to follow a golf ball in flight...hit the ball...please...sometime in the next hour if you maybe could?

The GQ violator...or better yet...just where do some of these people shop for their golf clothes...Farm and Fleet? Just the other day we had a fellow...certainly 50 years plus...with modishly long greasy white hair...milling about before an outing. This guy was wearing cut off jean shorts with at least an inch of fringe...extremely uneven hem...with it all so short as to almost expose his package!! A definite Woodstock refugee...I recall chuckling to myself as I entered the golf shop. I then plunked down my VISA card on the counter and told the boys inside to buy that guy a complimentary pair

of golf shorts...courtesy of the silent observer!

The nervous putter...otherwise known as the golfer who never, ever makes a putt...even his gimmes can't find the hole. This type is especially interesting for superintendents...because we tend to be out there on the greens on a daily basis. So we're forced to stop doing whatever it is that we do...and observe the golfers as they putt.

The first twosome this morning were a definite contrast to each other...one guy addressed his putts calmly...took nice, even practice strokes...and knocked in at least two nice putts that I was able to see. The second guy was Mr. Nervous Energy...always missing the green...chipping poorly...so was always 'away' as compared to his patient partner. So he's in a hurry to chip...and in a hurry to putt...couldn't get his feet to relax and stay still...had a hammer for a putting stroke...and three putted practically every green that I was able to see.

Naturally, he's pretty pissed off

because of his poor golf game...but the entire time he kept up with the nervous energy...while his patient partner got to the point of not knowing what to say!!! And hey fellas...isn't golf just a great game???

What this guy really needs is for his golfing buddies to surround the hole and just bat his approaching ball around to each other until somebody holes it out...a true definition of a golfing partner!

The truly obese golfer...just never seems to want to walk the golf course. He probably forgot long ago the sensation of walking out there on the golf course...or better yet...has never, ever walked a round of golf in his life! And these are not guys in their fifties or sixties...they are certainly young enough to hoof it around the links. These guys are always fiddling with their clothes...trying to stay tucked in...and keep their shorts from sagging down to their knees...I really want to slide on up to them and give them a few tips on how to look good on the course...but of course I just silently chuckle and move on.

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The full swing golfer...who has never learned how to take a half swing shot. Especially impressive around the greens...these types are usually the ones who don't have much of a putting stroke either. To them, the golf ball must be destroyed each and every time they hit it.

The stylish golfer...which encompasses just about everybody these days...except the Woodstock refugee mentioned earlier...these types are usually impressive out there on the links. They're even more impressive if they can actually hit the ball...but rest assured that there are tons of stylish golfers out there who are all show...and not much go!

The blue haired legion...cut a huge path for themselves as they absolutely dominate the golf course on Ladies Day. Usually the silent observer has absolute control over the golf course...and is fearless as he moves about on his domain. But if he encounters the Legionnaires...he must yield and let these elderly females pass unmolested...lest he encounter

their wrath. However, he can still silently observe them...and gain a few silent laughs as they slowly make their way around the front nine.

It is, in fact, wise for the silent observer to be wary around the blue hairs...never turning away from them. I heard a story once long ago about a superintendent observer who was not diligent and let a rookie employee wander unknowingly into their field of play. At the last moment the observer discovered what had happened...but had to sacrifice this man...sort of like the ignorant white soldiers wandering into sacred Sioux burial grounds...

The gorgeous female golfer...is a truly rare occurrence on most golf courses. When they do appear they seem to surround themselves with either a really dorky looking husband...or other less attractive females. They do attract attention...the staff radio traffic starts to pick up when they enter the cart area...and all types of silent observation and lustful mental telecommunication springs up from everybody...from the 16 year old cart kid to the 70 year old rough mower

operator...proving once again that all healthy heterosexual males are pretty much alike...

Let me say in serious conclusion...they say that the satisfaction of being a golf course superintendent is derived from actually being able to be out on the course every day...which is true.

What they don't ever mention...is that in addition to observing the elements...and the golf course itself...we silent observers are constantly watching the golfers. We are constantly and silently observing them. And we are anonymous out there...sometimes I really feel as if I'm wearing camouflage! It is our mission to be silent, be anonymous, and to observe. I for one will carry on that tradition.

So this silent observation...from which springs so much good humor...will continue unabated....because it's a little known facet of this great game.

And I for one am enjoying myself too much as I silently observe the golfers...🏌️

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