



# Economic Downturn in Golf May Be BEST Time for a USGA Green Section Visit

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Golf course superintendents everywhere, not just in Wisconsin, are going through 2003 budgets with a fine-toothed comb, looking for any expenses that can be reduced or eliminated over the coming months. Sometimes we look in the wrong places.

There are some among us (and among those we work for) who consider subscriptions to such services as the USGA Green Section or the UW - Madison TDL as discretionary expenses. In a sense, they may be that when compared to water and labor.

But I argue that circumstances like we face in golf these days are the most important time to get an objective look at your golf course operation and some helpful suggestions on ways to temper or disguise budget deficiencies.

If faced with the need to reduce expenditures, obviously the familiarity a course superintendent has with the property and the attitude of the players is the first and most important person to turn to. But none of us has the vast exposure to all kinds of other golf courses and their successes in budget and agronomic matters like the Green Section agronomists. It is not only what an individual agronomist, like Bob Vavrek, has seen in his years of Green Section service. When you have a Green Section visit, you are essentially accessing the experience of the other agronomists from around the country as well. These guys are really good about sharing information among themselves, and in fact consult with one another when confronted with a particularly difficult problem. Regardless of how well read you are or the extent of your own golf

course travels and experience or your own networking with colleagues, no one of us can match what the Green Section brings to a course during a visit.

The Green Section will accommodate you and the course officials when planning the timing of a visit. You can get a visit in any season (including a winter meeting like we once had) and at any time of the day. Want the agronomist to stay and report directly to the board of directors at an evening meeting? Done. Would you see value in having Bob Vavrek meet with you and the green committee? Not a problem either. The visit you plan with the Green Section will be arranged to suit your circumstances. You will talk about the

issues you want to talk about and get help with.

Wherever golf turf educational meetings are held, the USGA Green Section agronomists are there. They are part of our GCSAA conference, and the Wisconsin State Golf Association endorses their value to Wisconsin golf courses.

I don't want to go through the year without that impartial, unbiased look at the golf course I am responsible for maintaining. The visit will only help me provide a better product.

And the good advice you'll receive will save your budget money. What could be better than that these days? ♣

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