



# Logic on the Golf Course

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

Logic on the golf course is that process of deciding on best course management practices on a continual basis. It is that ability to make decisions over the course of an hour, a day, a week, a month, or a season...that impact productivity, course playability, and personal attitude as the season wears on...

Logic on the golf course can be short term...as in how to deploy your meager 6-8 man squad on a daily basis to best defend the springtime playing condition of your golf facility.

Logic on the golf course can also be long term...as in deciding on recommendations to the green committee or ownership as to consistent management of their golf course...or writing up a long term improvement plan for the facility.

We all practice this logic everyday. In fact, it's a huge part of our everyday routine. Given the fact that we are guided by club officials or owners...we are all still responsible for making decisions all day, every day.

Our ability to think logically and make good decisions is probably far more important than our raw knowledge of turfgrass science, but as we know a blending of these two skills, and innumerable others, combine to create the skill set of the modern golf course superintendent.

And, for the purposes of this essay, logic tells us that the phrase 'course management' refers to things horticultural and agroeconomic...not to the new, and almost plagiaristic fad of using our time honored 'golf course management' to refer to some PGA wannabe's ability to negotiate any given round of golf in the fewest possible strokes!

The following logical tidbits are

all true...and come to you only slightly embellished...

Whereon a certain veteran superintendent wanted too desperately to take advantage of a donation of a mountainous supply of choice topsoil from a course side home construction site.

After trying...and failing... to convince ownership of accepting the topsoil and using it all to erase a worn out, ill-placed maintenance path running adjacent to a fairway...our logical hero decided to go ahead with the project anyway.

This old maintenance road, you see, was a mixture of subsoil, asphalt grindings, and potholes...and had been deteriorating badly for some time. The recommendation to repair or eliminate this path is in our long forgotten, long-term course improvement plan.

To the superintendent, logic certainly says that this plan should be taken seriously, and implemented and followed as budget allows. To everybody else, the long-term plan has been practically forgotten.

So, because logic dictated that action be taken or the topsoil opportunity would be lost forever, the veteran decided to ask for forgiveness later instead of permission 'up front'...and then got his butt chewed...and his job threatened...for going against the wishes of ownership! Logic also tells me that verbal communication and convincing skills were lacking...so in the end the veteran sort of forced himself into a bad situation.

In the end, the topsoil project is a big success. Grass is starting to establish...golfers don't have to negotiate the huge cart path scar on the eighth hole...and the mounds surrounding the fairway and green of No. 8 are pristine after years of having this cart path scar along their spines. Golfers are commenting positively about the change...and all will be well.

Logic this season is also keeps telling me...the educated, literate golf course veteran...that open, links type courses should stay that way. Peppering this huge, expansive, public golf course with trees would

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not be in our best interest. Manicuring this monster is also not logically in our best interest. Too many acres and too much land in extremely remote locations...way out of play...and so, logically, way down on the maintenance priority list.

Yet, survey after survey returned in May 2005 from our members expressed their desire for more trees...more trees...more trees....and less 'wild grass'/prairie grass/unmowed, unkempt grass.

Better yet, we sent out a different version of this survey to the homeowners who live around the course. Their number one concern? The unkempt, wild look of the prairie grasses bordering the rear boundary of many of their lots and how it affects their property values.

Unfortunately for them, logic

has told me and our ownership (for about 10 years now) that;

because we operate on a budget, and

because these areas are out of play, and best yet,

because the homeowners here do not own the golf course, we logically cannot and do not listen to them. They must accept the golf course for what it is...an open, prairie grassed, links style course with many low and un-maintained areas!

In fact, almost every homeowner concern from the survey had to do with making the golf course more manicured...to again enhance their property values! It was all so logical, so transparent, and so humorous.

Logic also tells me that future

complaints and homeowner concerns will center chiefly on their version of what living on a golf course is all about. If we simply gave them;

24/7 access,

their own golf cars,

fishing rights,

walking the dog rights,

trespassing anytime rights,

jogging rights,

F&B daily discounts.

We think that they might then be satisfied. Why we chuckle is that their collective attitude is that they have a due and a right to these abovementioned items...simply because they bought a lot and built a home on our golf course! We do not care that they have an extremely

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expensive investment of a home. We think that civilians who build homes on golf courses should do more research before committing.

Logic again simply says...own the course and then make the rules. For our ownership, this golf course is not a very profitable investment so far. At the very least, letting them make their own rules and set their own policies is their undeniable right. Expecting us to even consider any of those homeowner requests is very illogical.

What these homeowners also do not seem to understand is that there is no guarantee that this golf course remains a golf course. This land could someday be sold off to a developer for the purpose of transforming it into a subdivision! Petty minded homeowners need to give just a bit of credit to an elderly couple who are owning and operating this golf course, year after year, with more attached stress than they really need to be feeling on an almost daily basis. Obviously, these homeowners do not think logically.

If you give it a chance to ferment in your mind, golf course

logic can run in many directions.

Logic daily reminds me that many of my hopes and dreams for this golf course may never be realized. I really want to define this place as a links type course. I really want to expand our prairie grass acres, and enhance our 'no mow' areas. I really want the green light on building blue tees on about 4-5 of our shorter par 4 holes that are just begging for a simple extended length tee. We may still have a good chance to do all of that.

Yet, it doesn't even bother me so much anymore that we probably won't be able to really showcase this place like it deserves. Too many money constraints, too little time

for extras. Everybody in golf these days sings this same blue tune.

Logic tells me that, in the end, we will be remembered positively, by our members and these fickle homeowners simply because of our desire to constantly maintain and improve our property.

Logic also tells me that things around here in the future may change, and most of these members and homeowners may not like the changes.

We hope that their own form of logical thinking kicks in when remembering the group that has owned and managed this golf course for the past fifteen years. ♣

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