

# PLANNING ?

## Why Waste The Time!

by RANDALL NELSON

SUPERINTENDENT OWATONNA COUNTRY CLUB

My nine years as superintendent of Owatonna Country Club has been very rewarding to me personally and has been a tremendous learning experience. I took over the superintendent's job in April of 1975 with a four inch snow covering a course which I had never seen and which was just maturing from an expansion from nine to eighteen holes two years previous. Upon departure, the previous superintendent informed me that one week after seeding a 100 year storm hit with six inches of rain falling in less than four hours. I felt as though only Noah could have had it worse.

As the snow cover relinquished its grip on the course, I saw what today has been a nine year reconstruction of a poor construction job initially. And I have to say, the reconstruction is by no means nearing completion. Mother Nature can raise havoc with even the best landscaped course; however, as I know first hand, a poorly constructed course is devastated even more. I am writing this article to offer my suggestions to other nine-holers thinking about expanding to eighteen. My experiences at Owatonna have encouraged me to highlight six points which may help others to do more thinking before they take the plunge.

1) Plan. Before all else, talk with members, owners, all involved parties and develop a long range plan for the course. This stage costs nothing and yet is probably forgotten before many construction jobs. One never knows how big an operation may become. Just dream and jot down ideas to discuss with the architect.

2) Borrow Big. This statement may scare some individuals, but there is never a better time to do it right and spend what needs to be spent than during the initial construction. In Owatonna's case alone our reconstruction costs over nine years has roughly equaled the initial construction costs. So as the old saying goes, "Pay now or pay later".

3) Choosing An Architect. Check out the reputation and past performances of the architects who seem comfortable to work with. Everyone playing the future course will in all actuality be playing the personality of the architect. A membership of 36 handicappers may not enjoy a 200 yard carry over sand and water which only an architect with Pete Dye's ingenuity could have imagined.

4) Scrutinize Construction. In my case I can't emphasize this point enough. A knowledgeable individual must be on the site daily to monitor progress and eliminate unforeseen maintenance and playability problems. There are bound to be problems despite constant supervision, but most will have been remedied before seeding.

5) Irrigation. Providing the best irrigation system, preferably automatic, at the time of seeding will in my mind save more money over the life of the operation than the initial cost of the system.

6) Financially Sound Maintenance Practices. From the moment the seed has germinated an annual maintenance budget must be provided to bring about the plan which was originated in the plan stage. It makes no sense to envision a championship course, pay for the construction and then try to maintain the course on less than the needed budget.

Expansion impacts the entire operation of a club so before wasting time and money redoing, spend a great deal of time considering these key points and more importantly, plan what the goal is to be.

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