

# HOLE NOTES

Official Publication  
of the  
Minnesota Golf Course  
Superintendents' Association

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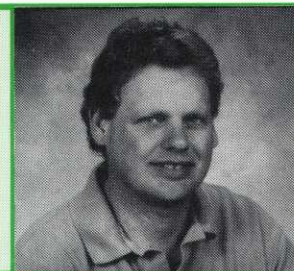
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## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

### Apples to Oranges and other tales of comparative thinking



They do it at the grocery store. They do it at the car dealership. So why shouldn't they do it at the golf course? Do what, you ask? Compare. If you're like me, you wish you had a dime for every time a member or regular at your course approached you with the comment "At the course I played last week, they . . . (you fill in the blank). Why don't we do that?" It seems like every golfer likes to bring back that tid-bit of information from another course that they think you should implement immediately. From rolling greens, to painting the inside lip of the cup hole, to actually having COLD water in the Igloo coolers on the course, there is always an idea lurking around the corner. In a broader scope, the overall condition of the course also gets compared with all the other golf courses that your members/patrons play. It doesn't seem to matter where your course ranks in the hierarchy, or pecking order, of golfdom, someone is there ready to let you know how your course stacks up against the "competition."

**The danger in making such comparisons** (and there are dangers) is that most of the people making the comparisons don't have adequate information to pass judgment. For example, if a golfer from your club plays in the Invitational Tournament at Brokencart CC and returns frothing and gasping about how fast the greens were, the question that will undoubtedly be asked is, "Why aren't our greens like that?" To me, that question begs answers to about twenty questions of my own. Questions like, "What was the actual stimp reading? Were the greens highly contoured? Were the greens specially groomed for tournament play? What is the dominant turf species? What soil is under that grass? How did the greens accept the approach shot? What is the maintenance budget? And the question that generally makes them think the most — How much are the dues?" Usually the answer to these questions range from a blank stare to "I didn't realize those things were that complicated." The reality is that no two courses have the same soil, drainage, maintenance budget, etc., so there will always be differences in the way one course is maintained when compared to another.

I especially enjoy the folks that constantly compare course conditions to those courses that have double the maintenance budget, and at the same time compare their dues structure to clubs that require half the monthly outlay. It's like shopping at Sach's and expecting Kmart prices. Somewhere back in Turf 101 wasn't there an axiom like, "You can't expect a champagne golf course on a beer budget!"

The bottom line for superintendents gets back to educating our members/patrons. When people ask questions, we need to give them answers. If they don't understand, then we have to explain. The urge to compare will always be around, and golfers will always expect their course to improve.

What golfers need to understand is that superintendents are there to provide the best golf course possible, **WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF LIMITED RESOURCES!** If we could make wine from water, we would. If we could make water drain uphill, or seed germinate overnight, or greens that aerify themselves or any number of other money or time saving improvements, we'd do it. We go to great lengths to stretch our maintenance dollars, but here is a point where the dollar ends and common sense begins.

— Fred Taylor  
MGCSA President

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