



Within the Leather

by David Kazmierczak CGCS

Greeting and salutations from balmy Minnesota! Or, as the locals like

to call it: "The Spring Breaker's Paradise." Come experience our brown, cool beaches on dark, freshly melted lakes. Enjoy the scrub brush starting to leaf out and the last of the ginormous parking lot snow piles releasing their watery content. But most of all, enjoy our freshly growing golf courses with tight fairways, soft, receptive greens and none of those nasty tree leaves to swat down a wayward shot. It's paradise!

If your General Manger or Golf Pro has run this promotional idea past you the last couple weeks, do not be alarmed. Everybody gets caught up in the moment occasionally, and can you blame them? The month of March 2012 will go down in the history books as the most outrageously, wonderfully warm and sometimes downright hot March ever. Unless, of course, you are one of those people who love the snow and cold. If you are one of those, this is not the column for you.

To put it simply, this is the March of my dreams. This is the spring I have been hoping for since I left the Kansas City area 13 years ago. Down there, the course was always waking up around the first week in March, and flying by the third week in March. We always conducted spring aerification on the Monday of the NCAA Basketball Championship game. It was my favorite time of the year down there because it was not too long before the heat ramped up, and stayed up, until late

September. That will not happen here though. This is Minnesota. It never gets too hot here, and the extra season will be nothing but a blessing for all. Or will it?

I addressed change a couple months ago, and as far as I am concerned, I am getting five quarters for a dollar this spring, maybe six. Check with your pro shop to see how much "change" this "change" in the weather patterns is netting your operation. After last season there are plenty of golf courses that can use the extra revenue this year. Yet, how is this very big change going to affect your operation?

The On Board question in this edition of Hole Notes asks that question. I encourage everybody to read it and get some perspective on how one superintendent thinks this early season will impact their lives. Hopefully it will get you to seriously think about your situation. The laws of physics state that for every action, there is a reaction, for every up, a down, for every good, a bad. It is called equilibrium and nature has a way of making everything right in the end. If that is the case, we may all be in for a very unique season, and at minimum, a very long season.

As I started speculating at just how advanced the growing season was when I was writing the On Board article when my foreman at Prestwick came into my office and started conversing about a few general topics and ended it with a summation in one sentence. A quick, short line that summed up one fraction of what we were about to embark upon in the time ahead. I started thinking to myself what other phrases I was going to hear this year that were out of the ordinary. Over the next few days, I didn't need to dream up the questions, comments or concerns, they came flowing to me in waves from various sources on the golf course.

They came from the Pro Shop, the

Restaurant, and the Maintenance Shop. They came from members, staff, and delivery drivers. Everybody had a piece of advice, or an observation, or a general assessment of how great the spring was and how it was going to affect our operation both good and bad. With that much material, how could I comprise the best of them and share with others?

Then it dawned on me- the Top Ten List. When I was in high school David Letterman had just started up his Late Night Show on NBC following the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. (Some of you reading this probably do not even know who Johnny Carson was which shows my age and kind of depresses me, but I will move on.)

The Late Night Show, which turned into the Late Show currently airing on CBS was a quirky, edgier show than its watered-down mainstream self is now. I used to stay up late whenever I could when I was in high school without getting caught by my parents concerned about my lack of sleep. They had reason to worry. By the time I got to college it was almost a religion with the guys I hung out with to stay up and catch Dave- at least until the Top Ten list came on. The Top Ten list was the highlight of the show, and I guess still is today.

My friends and I would occasionally come up with silly subjects just like on the real show and try to compile a top ten list on our own, usually on top of a few beers. Sometimes we would come up with some pretty funny stuff, until the next morning when we realized we really did not have a clue. I have a lot of respect for the writers of those shows, who have to produce material on a daily basis.

So here it goes- my first real attempt at a Top Ten List after about a 25 year layoff. I tried to pick the best lines both real and imagined for:

“Top ten abnormal things upper mid-west superintendents will hear this year”

10- “What’s the big dog doing lapping fairways with a rough mower? Don’t you have people for that?”

9- “Didn’t that Tee on number 14 used to have grass on it?”

8- “I can’t help but notice you have spent your budget on chemicals and fertilizer. It’s June. Care to elaborate?”

7- “I know it’s April 3rd, but why are these greens so slow?” (Maybe not so abnormal)

6- (From a member on March 14th) “Think I should get my crabgrass preventer on my lawn by the end of the week?” For the record: he did.

5- “What are your thoughts on a hybrid Bermuda for the range tee?”

4- “The greens are great but the edges are starting to look like the top of your head.”

3- “Boy you guys are going to have it easy this year!”

2- (March 20th) “Wow look at that tan. Did you just get back from Mexico or something?” (Unfortunately, no.)

...and the number one abnormal thing an upper mid-west superintendent will hear:

1- “Boss, I think the new IPM program is really working. It looks like the mole crickets are eating the goosegrass.”

Despite the various concerns listed above, I do think this will be solid season for most golf courses. Here is hoping that all of you enjoy the ride, take it all as it comes, be prepared for anything and above all take time to smell the flowers along the way.