

# Just When You Think You've Heard It All ...

Superintendents share stories regarding the most outlandish maintenance requests from golfers.

BY PATRICK J. GROSS

If you are in the golf business long enough, you get the feeling you've seen and heard just about everything. Most golfers are very passionate about the game and have specific ideas about what constitutes the perfect golf course. But when does the demand for perfect conditions cross the line from realistic to ridiculous? Here are a few examples of outlandish stories and unusual golfer requests from several superintendents.

**Keeping bunker sand dry.** Golfers seem to be very temperamental when it comes to the characteristics and playing quality of bunkers. Many loathe wet sand, preferring to always play from a dry bunker. In their mind, it should be possible to keep every drop of rain and sprinkler spray from hitting these precious hazards. One green committee member especially concerned about keeping the bunkers dry asked what it would cost to remove the sand from the bunkers each evening, store it in a dry location, and then put the sand back in the morning.

**Smoother bunkers.** Not only do the bunkers need to be dry all the time, but the sand surface must be perfectly smooth — not just regular smooth, but perfectly smooth. Maintenance crews now use a variety of rakes to groom the sand, from riding mechanical bunker rakes to flexible metal leaf rakes, each leaving a shallow furrow or rake mark after the bunker is groomed. One green chairman was particularly annoyed by the shallow rake marks, saying they were unfair because they produced an

“impeded lie.” Try to find that in the *Rules of Golf!*

**Orderly yardage markers.** Many courses today have installed small yardage disks on the sprinklers to indicate the distance to the green. Of course, the yardage disks rotate as the sprinklers rotate, so you may have to occasionally twist your head or take an extra step to decipher the number on the disk.

Apparently, this was too much effort for one golfer who asked, “Why can't the superintendent straighten out the yardage markers each morning so they point toward the green? Otherwise, the course looks messy!”

**It's like putting on a tee.** Play was backed up one weekend morning, and a golfer waiting to tee off on the first hole pulled out his putter to stroke a few balls. Soon, the superintendent passed by and the golfer called him over. He told the superintendent, “I don't know what you're doing around here, but the course is in terrible condition. These tees aren't even puttable!”

**A former junkie weighs in on weed control.** A new superintendent inherited a course with crabgrass problems. A regular golfer at the course was eager to share his advice on weed control with this tip: “Instead of spraying all the grass, why don't you just inject herbicide into the individual crabgrass plants with a hypodermic needle and syringe?” He was serious.

**The unattainable green speed.** One controversy that will be with us forever is green speed. Rest assured that

no matter how fast the greens are, they will never be fast enough. But how would you respond to a golfer who said the greens should be “fast/slow”? When asked to explain what he meant, the confused golfer said, “When you putt uphill on our greens, the ball rolls way too slow. Isn't there a way to make the greens faster when you're putting uphill and a little slower when you're putting downhill?”

These are just a few examples, and you can probably add several of your own crazy stories to the list.

Life would be so easy for superintendents if they could place a sign on the first tee instructing golfers to “keep off the grass.” Then golfers would not have to put up with all those annoying imperfections. But as golf psychologist Bob Rotella pointed out, “Golf is not a game of perfect.” That applies to the mechanics of the golf swing as well as the natural imperfections in surface quality typically encountered throughout the golf course. While superintendents constantly strive to improve golf course conditions, golfers will continue to provide friendly and not-so-friendly advice about what they think is the proper way to maintain a golf course. Listening to these bits of advice can be quite humorous. Don't be surprised by such ridiculous requests, because just when you think you've heard it all, another one is sure to come your way.

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