

No, It Really Is Not Just Your Golf Course!

The issues at your golf course are often being experienced by other courses in your area.

BY DARIN S. BEVARD

How many times have you said it at your club? “Ours is the only course that is having this problem. I played at the course down the street, and they did not have any problems. Their golf course was perfect.” Please, be honest. Have you said it? I’ll bet you have. The “only course with a problem” syndrome raises a red flag, in my opinion. More importantly, we should evaluate reasons why this statement is made so frequently.

There are many other things that happen only at “your” golf course. Yours is the only golf course that ever closes. No one else closes. Yours is the only golf course that ever has a frost delay. No other courses ever have a frost delay. Your course is the only one that had any winter damage, disease, etc. Basically, every other golf course is perfect. Why don’t golfers recognize problems when they visit other golf courses in the same way that they do at their own?

HEAD UP VS. HEAD DOWN

The “head up vs. head down” syndrome is one explanation for the “only our course” problem. When playing a new course, or at least one that they do not play on a regular basis, golfers tend to have their head up. They look around at the scenery and analyze each golf hole. They simply enjoy their new surroundings and soak in the golf experience. A thin spot here or a weed or two (or more) there go unnoticed. The goal is just to enjoy a different golf course. Additionally, most golfers will play a round of golf in 72 to 100

strokes. This does not lend itself to seeing every area of a golf course and providing a critical evaluation. Playing their regular course daily provides ample opportunity to notice problems.

At their own golf course, their head is down. Every blemish is noticed and criticized, regardless of the cause. They have seen everything that there is to see on their own golf course. There is no reason to look around because their golf course is not a new experience.

BIG EVENT SYNDROME

“Big Event Syndrome” is another common cause of “only at our golf course.” Be it member/guest or some other premier event at the “other” club, golfers often visit other golf courses for these special events. The condition of the golf course is peaked. Every detail is tended to; the greens are fast; every bunker is raked. The maintenance staff at that golf course has been preparing in one way or another for several weeks leading up to the event. If you look at your own club and think back to your big events, I believe you will find that your golf course was in top condition as well. The golf course superintendent makes a special effort to showcase the golf course for any major event, but these conditions cannot be sustained on a daily basis at most golf courses.

Many different factors impact daily conditions on the golf course. Weather is the biggest factor that regularly affects turfgrass maintenance. Most maintenance decisions are based on what practices can be implemented under a given set of weather conditions. When

it is hot and dry at your golf course, it is hot and dry at other local courses as well. Maybe XYZ Country Club has a new irrigation system that allows them to manage water more efficiently when environmental stresses arise.

Other factors influence daily conditions, including construction methods, turfgrass variety, irrigation efficiency, and last but certainly not least, available resources to implement maintenance practices (budget). In our region, similar problems are widespread at different golf courses at any point during the growing season.

Your golf course may have problems. Realize that you are not alone. Every golf course has problems that need to be addressed. At times, problems will occur on your golf course and not at others. The point of this rant is not to say that no problems exist on your golf course. We all know that they do. But your golf course is not perfect and neither is any other course that is maintaining turfgrass with the same basic resources as your own. Do not make the mistake of comparing your golf course conditions to a facility that has far more resources.

Every facility should strive to correct problems that exist and improve the golf course overall. But do not talk yourself into believing that yours is the only course having problems. The grass is not always greener, faster, or better at the course down the road! It is probably about the same color as yours.

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