**<u>Tale Of Two Golf Courses</u>**
**<u>…In Good Times</u>**

By Dave Doherty

Spring 2012, came early and was a welcome relief for most golf courses in North America.

Throughout the Midwest, the northern states, the east coast and Canada, most courses budget zero income for January and February. However this year with spring arriving four to six weeks early most courses experienced very good revenues, especially those courses that because of good agronomic practices last year came alive with the good weather, and for the most part were ready for play.

However, there *was* a down side, in that most courses didn't have enough maintenance staff to service the needs of the growing grasses and the daily prepping of the course for play. I know of courses where the superintendent and some of the maintenance staff slept on cots in the maintenance facility to keep up with the work. (My father used to call this "*pride in your work*.")

So this is the tale of two golf course facilities and how they handled the record revenues from this year's spring conditions. Facility A is a 36-hole facility consisting of an 18-hole private course and an 18-hole public course. Facility B is an 18-hole private/public facility. Both facilities came out of winter in excellent playing condition.

While touring facility A in late May with the owner, his two superintendents and the ISTRC field representative the owner mentioned that he had added money to each of the courses' budgets to enable an increase in staff and that they had also acquired a rather expensive new piece of equipment, which they had needed to take the two courses to the next level.

My reaction was 'speechless.' After realizing what the owner had just said in a very nonchalant manner, I mentioned what a wonderful act I thought he had made. His response? ***The golf facility is his most treasured asset and that he had to take care of it.***

Upon arriving at facility B on mid-July day around 5:30 p.m., I couldn't help but notice that the parking lot was filled and cars were also parked along the shoulder of the road leading up to the club house and bag drop.

I queried the superintendent, and asked if there was a tournament going on. He said, "There's no tournament", and that the cars had become the norm and that it was difficult to get a tee time. We toured the property and then retired to the clubhouse…all of the eating and beverage areas were packed and we had to wait for a place to sit.

Facility B was recording record revenues in every department, and had been since they opened in early spring. I was shocked when I learned that the owners had just cut budgets and staff and was in the process of reducing each even further.

The owners of Facility B decided that now would be the ideal time to sell the property and recoup their investment. By reducing the budgets and staff I assume their thinking was to make the books look more inviting to potential purchasers.

What I witnessed was the loss of morale and many of the quality staff that had worked so hard to bring the facility to the level that it is today.

Can this high level of product and service that has brought in record revenues continue with loss of staff and reduced budgets? **Not a chance!**

It is not my place to judge the decisions of others – **question yes, judge no**. However I do know that without an on-going investment in our properties we will not be able to prosper in the future. I also know that if we continue to invest in our future, the chances of the outcome being more to our expectations will be greatly enhanced.

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