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### Tight Money And Course Management

By Dave Doherty

WOW!!!! What a roller coaster ride.

During the last couple of months I've given eight seminars and visited courses from high-end private to low-end daily fee.

I've attended board meetings where the conversation was as up and down as the stock market. I have also attended board meetings that were calmly and professionally run in which each member had sufficient information to ask intelligent questions and productive conversation followed.

In those meetings that were productive, the board, the general manager and the golf course superintendent were all on the same page with adequate information to make intelligent and rational decisions without panic.

Many courses across the country are experiencing a downturn in rounds played and in memberships. However there are also a fairly healthy percentage of courses that are experiencing an upturn in rounds played and in memberships.

Six courses that I am familiar with and have visited over the last few months come to mind; three public/county courses and three private courses. Two of these public/county courses have seen a substantial decrease in rounds played and have announced an increase in daily fees for next year.

The other public course has seen an *increase* in rounds played and has increased the budget for maintenance of the course for next year. All three service the same general area.

Of the three private courses, one has seen an *increase* in rounds played and revenues, and has a waiting list for new members, the other two are working on plans to hold on to current members and attract new members while reducing the maintenance budget and staff. I wish them luck.

**What does each of the successful clubs/courses have in common?** They each started on a plan within the last few years to find out and understand the physical condition of the course and what could be done to improve the playing conditions based on **science**.

Each member of each of these club's maintenance committees understood what needed to be done and why. All three of the successful courses now have a better product to offer to the golfing community and will survive this golf recession.

Those clubs without a plan and the knowledge to start a program to improve and

maintain their course will always be finger pointing and replacing key employees hoping for a miracle and wasting dollars. In today's world of science, coupled with common sense, this is a waste. If you don't have a plan to improve your greens, start one now based on **physical properties science**.

What the economic and golf recession has forced us to do both at home and at our courses is to take a hard look at where we spend our money and what our return on investment is going to be.

Over the last several months a survey of different clubs in regards to dollar savings for chemicals was conducted. This survey was conducted of golf courses that have implemented a maintenance plan resulting in balanced physical properties that are compatible with their micro-climate and that have also taken steps to vent and oxygenate their greens. The response was overwhelming for substantial dollar savings in chemicals (mainly - fertilizer and fungicides). Most responded that they had realized a 25% to 50% reduction in chemical usage.

*Whether it's 25 or 50 percent, the savings are substantial.*

**Balanced Physical properties = Healthy greens = Less use of chemicals.**

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