

FALL 2024

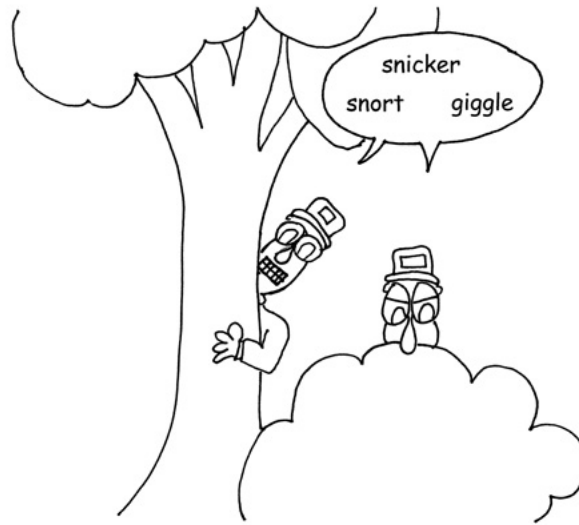
## To Whom It May Concern

By Doug Breen, Superintendent,  
Golf North Properties.

I just heard from a particularly unhappy customer. He was emphatic that not only is greens aeration unnecessary, and that 'nobody else does it anymore' - but that we had deliberately scheduled aeration to ruin his 'birthday event'. Let's start with the birthday part. We might have known that it was his birthday, if he had booked a small group, or arranged a gathering in the clubhouse, or literally done anything to support the club or let us know about it - but he didn't. The 'birthday event' was him playing with his regular group for the 167<sup>th</sup> day in a row and heading to the Legion for cheap draught. But that's not the point - let's get back to aeration.

Since COVID, Ontario golf courses have welcomed countless new golfers into the fold, and there is no reason why they wouldn't be taken aback by the sight of us violating the putting surface in a way that must seem unthinkable to the uninitiated. I recall being horrified the first time I saw a greens aerator doing what greens aerators do. That would make sense - but we have golfers who have been around for decades, who are still shocked by routine maintenance practices. Or similarly caught off guard by annual naturally occurring events. Apparently, it is the Superintendent's fault when leaves fall off trees or there is a frost delay. We had a foursome demand their money back, because our "website didn't warn that there would be bugs".

Last Father's Day (the busiest day of the year in public golf), we had a group who kept trying play as a fivesome, while they took copious social media pictures and shot video for Tik Tok. By the time they got to the second green, there was a two-hole gap in front of them, even though they had let multiple groups play through. The ensuing fracas with the Course Marshall, ultimately



### What golfers think we do after setting a particularly difficult pin placement.

led to the Police being called to escort them off the property. I got a message the next day from one group whose 'Father's Day was ruined by our overly aggressive Marshall', and a bunch more from other groups whose 'Father's Day was ruined by our overly passive Marshall'.

As replying to these types of messages is now a large part of my Monday morning, not to mention sifting through customer feedback forms and social media posts - I have composed an open letter to all the golfers out there - customers past, present, and future:

Dear Golfer:

We - the Golf Course Superintendents of Ontario have a message for you. Whether you are new to golf, or whether you've been around since the days of Old Tom Morris. We're not trying to ruin your game. We don't aerate or topdress because we want to see you three putt - we do it so the greens will be far better 98% of the time. It's short-term pain, for long-term gain.

We don't select difficult pin placements to make you so miserable that you never play our course

again - we move them around to distribute wear, while making every attempt to make the course play with the same degree of difficulty each day. They did a double-blind study - it turns out that golfers putting uphill rate greens as slow, while those putting downhill rate them as fast.

We don't take perverse pleasure in holding up the first tee on a frosty morning - your footsteps will literally shred the plant cell walls with the ice crystals inside. And no, you can't go on the putting green or driving range either - as they are made of grass too. It isn't relevant that there was no frost at your house.

We do our best to collect leaves, and to keep the rough cut so you can find your ball. Speaking of grass, it's slippery when it's wet - stop suing us every time you fall.

Golf is played in a natural environment, so your clubs will get dirty, your shoes will sometimes get grass stains, and occasionally you will find stones in bunkers. There are also roots at the bottom of pretty much every tree. You will be attacked by mosquitos, black flies, and Canada geese - be thankful that we don't have alligators and grizzlies.

Some days it will be cold, others it will be hot. Sometimes it rains. Contrary to popular belief, the OGSA doesn't control the weather - only the CIA can do that.

It would be counterintuitive, to think for a moment, that the on-course staff have a vested interest in making your experience so awful that our course becomes unpopular, and ultimately unprofitable. We aren't trying to ruin your day - we actually spend every waking hour striving to create the best playing environment possible within our physical and budgetary restrictions. We want you to have fun!

Signed,  
Your Superintendent. ■