



Why Maintenance Closures Are Essential

Written by Joel Johnston, Superintendent, West Haven G&CC. Photo provided by Jasmine Wong, Toronto GC.

Golf courses are living, breathing landscapes that require constant care to remain in top playing condition. While it may be frustrating for golfers to see a “Course Closed for Maintenance” sign, these temporary shutdowns are not only necessary—they are vital for the long-term health of the course and the quality of the playing experience. Many clubs schedule this practice every Monday, while others may only dedicate one morning a month—any time the course is fully available without play can be beneficial.

Below are key talking points to help explain to golfers, members, and boards why maintenance closures matter. These benefits demonstrate that closures should be viewed as a strategic investment in course quality and long-term playability—not as an inconvenience.

1. PROTECTING TURF HEALTH

One of the most important reasons for scheduled maintenance closures is to protect and preserve the overall health of the turf. Golf course grass—

particularly on high-traffic areas like greens, tees, and fairways—endures continuous stress from daily play, foot traffic, mowing, and weather conditions. Without occasional rest and recovery, even the best-maintained turf will eventually decline. Maintenance closures give grounds crews the necessary window to perform critical agronomic practices such as:

- **Aeration** – Relieves soil compaction and allows air, water, and nutrients to reach the root zone, promoting stronger, deeper root systems.
- **Topdressing** – Helps smooth the surface of greens, manage thatch, and support uniform turf growth.
- **Fertilizer and Plant Health Applications** – Can be applied more effectively and safely without interfering with play or risking player exposure.
- **Reseeding and Repairs** – Damaged or thinning turf areas can be addressed without being immediately disturbed by traffic, allowing the grass to recover and establish properly.

Without these periodic closures, turf conditions can deteriorate rapidly, leading to poor playing surfaces, increased disease pressure, and costly long-term repairs. By giving the course time to “breathe,” golf clubs are not only protecting the turf but also preserving the integrity and playability of the course for the future.

2. IMPROVED PLAYING CONDITIONS

Routine maintenance closures play a crucial role in delivering the high-quality playing experience golfers expect. With the course temporarily free of play, maintenance teams can complete tasks more efficiently and thoroughly—without the constraints or interruptions that come with active play. This window of uninterrupted access allows for detailed attention to key areas of the course, resulting in:

- **Smoother, faster greens** – thanks to consistent aeration, topdressing, and rolling.

- More consistent fairways and tee boxes - with improved turf density, mowing patterns, and moisture management.
- Clean, well-maintained bunkers - as crews can reshape edges, check drainage, and replace sand where needed.
- Improved overall aesthetic and playability - as the course receives focused attention without the pressure of keeping up with daily traffic.

Ultimately, these efforts translate directly to a better on-course experience. Golfers benefit from more reliable lies, true ball roll, and consistent conditions from tee to green hallmarks of a professionally maintained golf facility.

3. LONG-TERM COST SAVINGS

While maintenance closures may seem like a short-term disruption, they are a strategic investment that

helps avoid far greater costs in the future. Regular upkeep, performed proactively during these closures, prevents minor issues from escalating into major, expensive problems.

By staying ahead of wear and tear, golf course operators can:

- Extend the lifespan of turfgrass by maintaining healthy root systems and minimizing long-term damage.
- Reduce the need for major renovations such as full green or fairway resurfacing, which can be both costly and time-consuming.
- Preserve irrigation systems, drainage, and bunker infrastructure, which deteriorate faster when maintenance is deferred due to constant play.
- Lower labor and material costs over time through efficient, scheduled upkeep rather than reactive, emergency repairs.

In essence, every maintenance

closure is a form of risk management. By dedicating time to proper care, courses avoid the financial burden and lost revenue associated with large-scale repairs or extended shutdowns down the line.

4. EFFICIENT USE OF LABOUR AND EQUIPMENT

Maintenance closures allow grounds crews to work more efficiently, safely, and effectively—maximizing both labour productivity and equipment usage. Without golfers on the course, staff can access all areas freely and complete tasks without the need to stop, reroute, or work around play.

Key advantages include:

- Increased productivity - Crews can work continuously without delays, completing large-scale projects in less time.
- Use of larger, specialized equipment - Machines that would typically disrupt play or pose



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safety risks can be used freely during closures, improving the quality of work.

- Reduced wear and tear on equipment – Efficient, uninterrupted workflows reduce mechanical strain and extend the lifespan of valuable maintenance machinery.
- Improved crew safety – With no players on the course, the risk of accidents is significantly reduced, allowing for a safer working environment.

By optimizing labour and resources during closures, maintenance teams can deliver higher-quality results with less disruption, ultimately improving the course while keeping operational costs in check.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Modern golf course management is about more than just aesthetics and playability – it's also about environmental responsibility. Maintenance closures provide essential opportunities to implement eco-conscious practices that are difficult or impossible to carry out during active play.

- During these closures, superintendents and grounds teams can focus on:
- Water conservation – Deep irrigation cycles, leak repairs, and sprinkler system calibrations can be done without disrupting play, leading to more efficient water use.
- Integrated pest and weed management – Carefully timed applications of low-impact products can be made with precision, minimizing exposure to players and reducing environmental runoff.
- Soil health improvements – Composting, organic amendments, and soil testing are more effectively managed when the course is closed.

- Habitat preservation – Native plant restoration, pollinator-friendly landscaping, and wildlife management programs can be maintained without interference.

By using maintenance closures to prioritize sustainability, golf courses not only protect the land they occupy but also enhance their reputation as responsible stewards of the environment. This approach supports long-term ecological health while meeting the expectations of environmentally conscious golfers and communities.

6. MEMBER AND GUEST SATISFACTION

Ironically, closing the course occasionally leads to higher member satisfaction in the long run. While maintenance closures may initially seem like a disruption to regular play, they are ultimately key to ensuring a better golfing experience—one that members and guests notice and appreciate. Well-timed, well-communicated closures demonstrate a course's commitment to excellence and long-term quality.

When players return to find smoother greens, firmer fairways, and overall improved conditions, the

benefits become immediately clear. Beyond the physical improvements, thoughtful communication around closures helps build trust and transparency. Successful courses often:

- Provide advance notice of scheduled closures, allowing players to plan accordingly.
- Share what work is being done, helping golfers understand how the temporary inconvenience leads to long-term gains.
- Highlight the outcomes, such as better playing surfaces, faster greens, or enhanced aesthetics.

By managing expectations and delivering consistent improvements, courses can turn what might seem like a negative into a strong positive—enhancing player satisfaction, loyalty, and overall perception of the facility.

While maintenance closures might seem like a temporary inconvenience, they are an essential part of any well-run golf course's operational plan. These short-term pauses yield long-term rewards—healthier turf, better playability, lower costs, and greater environmental responsibility. Embracing this practice is key to sustaining the quality and reputation of the course for years to come. ■

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