



TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT

A Superintendent's Guide to
Preparing a Golf Course
for Competition

John C. Miller, CGCS

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To my wife, Gail, and my son, Brandon, for their patience and understanding during the long hours and sacrifices they have endured so that I could do the one thing I have a passion for: being a golf course superintendent. Also to my mother and father, for all of their support and encouragement over the years. And last, but not least, to the spouses of golf course superintendents everywhere who sacrifice so that they can do their job.

FOREWORD

Since the days of Old Tom Morris, golf course maintenance has been a mystical blend of art and science. The greenkeeper or superintendent is called upon to use his powers of observation and intuition of things to come to most effectively and efficiently apply his knowledge, skill, and available resources to grow healthy turf. It is comparable to a friendly chess game played against Mother Nature: She has control of the weather and pests, and the superintendent must anticipate her moves and defend against them. The winner is determined by the golfers, based on whether the playing surfaces of the golf course meet or exceed their expectations.

When the profession was in its infancy, 150 years ago, the greenkeeper had few tools or resources to work with, so his ability to win the golfer's favor was much more art than science. As turfgrass science evolved over the past century, an increasing emphasis was placed on the science, and less on the art, of green-keeping. Today, the pendulum is shifting again, in response to an environmental reawakening and a focus on resource conservation; once again, the art of golf course grooming is becoming more important. Unfortunately, while the science of turfgrass has been well documented, the artful side has not. That makes John Miller's timely book an invaluable source of information, which is not taught in school.

I have been privileged to know John from the time he was a young greenkeeper at the London Country Club, a small rural country club in Ohio, where my mom and dad were members. I played the course there often, and my background in golf course management enabled me to observe and judge who was winning the golf course chess game, Mother Nature or the greens staff. After John completed his formal education and became the golf course superintendent of the club, I continued to observe the

contest, and I marveled at how often John emerged victorious, even with few resources at his disposal. In retrospect, I now realize that John was mastering the *art* of greenkeeping.

As John's professional stature grew, and he moved up the career ladder to better funded and resourced jobs in Ohio, he never forgot the lessons of his early years. Today, as the first tour agronomist for the Ladies Professional Golfers Association (LPGA), he is able to share his knowledge, experience, and art with his fellow superintendents when he visits and consults for tournament venues across North America. And now he has expanded his reach by taking the time to write this book and codify his knowledge and insights.

Tournament Management: A Superintendent's Guide to Preparing a Golf Course for Competition was not written only for high-budget tour stops, but to assist all superintendents and greenkeepers, regardless of their available resources. Remember, this is the artful side of golf course maintenance, and as in Old Tom's day, the less you have to work with the more artful you need to be.

I trust that you will find John's book as interesting as it is helpful. That is the spirit in which it was written. It is this willingness among practitioners to share information that has made golf course maintenance such a great profession and industry to work in today.

Michael J. Hurdzan, PhD

Hurdzan/Fry Environmental Golf Course Design

American Society of Golf Course Architects

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CHAPTER ONE

PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

*Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection, we
can catch excellence.*

—VINCE LOMBARDI

All golf courses and clubs host tournaments. Many are put on for club members or regular golfers at the local public golf course; others are hosted by the golf course and run by professional organizations. These tournaments may take on a variety of formats, from club championships and member-guest outings to state and professional tournaments. But no matter what the format or the venue of these tournaments, a detailed and well-thought-out plan is essential to their successful outcome.

No golf course superintendent, no matter how skilled in the art and science of greens management, can effectively implement a tournament plan without the cooperation of all the tournament stakeholders. Thus, the first step in the planning process must be to identify these people.

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

Start by making a list of everyone who will be involved with your event, all those you will need to communicate with throughout plan implementation. This list may contain some or all of the following:

- Owner of the course/club
- Board of directors, board president

- Greens chairperson
- General manager
- Director of golf
- Golf professional
- Food and beverage director
- Tournament chairperson/committee chairs
- Assistant golf course superintendent
- Full-time and seasonal maintenance staff

With that list in hand, you can begin to gather information from each of those individuals.

SOLICITING INPUT

Solicit input from everyone who will be involved in the tournament, to ensure that you have all the information you will need to carry out each and every aspect of your plan, effectively and efficiently. The information you seek will, of course, vary depending on the source. For example:

- Your golf professional will tell you the basic parameters of the tournament—the date of the event, the number of people playing, the type of golfers, and how the course should be set up.
- The food and beverage director will provide you with a list of possible food stations that will need to be set up to accommodate the golfers and spectators.
- The club manager will inform you about any contracts that have been signed, and explain the details of the agreements that have been reached with the companies, and how this will affect the course and the tournament.
- Committee members (described in the next section) will itemize the expectations of golfers or members for the tournament.
- The assistant superintendent and the maintenance staff will update you about current conditions and any problems on the course, as well as offer their perspective as to what needs to be done to meet the needs of the other parties.

Once you are sure you have left no one out of your information-gathering process, take that information and start putting it into

useful, and usable, form. You might want to start by combining any areas that overlap or deal with generally the same issues or situations, to avoid duplication of effort. Once you have honed these areas, you can begin to establish committees.

ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES

Tournament committees will be composed of the people who have relevant knowledge in each of the areas you delineated in the information-gathering phase, those whose help will be critical to making the tournament successful. Tournament committees typically cover the following areas:

- Scoring
- Security
- Player Registration
- Construction (this includes skyboxes, bleachers, roping and staking the golf course; this area heavily involves the golf course superintendent)
- Traffic and Parking
- Communications
- Media

Be sure everyone is onboard before scheduling a first meeting with these groups, at which time they will identify their specific goals and objectives.

You, as golf course superintendent, need not be present at every committee meeting; but it is your responsibility to communicate on a regular basis with the chairs of each committee to ensure they are addressing their assigned objectives, and in a timely fashion.

The information you will need from these meetings should answer such questions as:

- What is the caliber of golfer playing in the event?
- How many golfers will there be?
- How many days will the tournament and any practice rounds last?
- What will be the schedule for the tournament (including start time and type of start, e.g., #1 tee, #1 and #10 tees, shotgun, etc.)?

- What time will the maintenance staff be able to return to the course if evening maintenance is required?
- Will spectators be permitted to view the event?
- Will there be outside vendors setting up; and, if so, what will they display? What will their power requirements be?
- Will portable restrooms be needed? If so, how many, and where will they be located?

As you are compiling this information, it's a good idea to generate checklists or action plans, detailing from start to finish who has been assigned to each task—from initial contact to on-site delivery of goods or services to cleanup and removal of the items.

LONG-TERM PREPARATION STRATEGY

Your planning process must begin months or, in some instances, years in advance, depending on the scope of the event. You will want to take a comprehensive inventory of your entire operation, to include your staff (number and individual capabilities); equipment (type and condition); maintenance facility; the course itself; and, most importantly, turf conditions, safety issues, logistics, and staging of operations.

Here are some general guidelines that every golf course superintendent will need to focus on from a long-term perspective:

1. Start no later than one year before the event.
2. Schedule regular planning meetings with all golf course staff and management.
3. Generate an equipment inventory.
4. Take an inventory of the entire operation.
5. Determine staffing requirements.
6. Review the golf course from a competitive standpoint, and make necessary changes.
7. Establish tournament conditioning goals.
8. Adjust the agronomic program to resolve any long-term problems for growing healthy turfgrass (see Chapter Two).
9. Develop a tournament budget line-item.
10. Conduct a trial run.

EVALUATING THE MAINTENANCE FACILITY

A good place to start is by taking a good, hard look at your maintenance facility. Is it spacious enough outside? Depending on the type of tournament your club/course is hosting, you may be required to bring in extra equipment, additional personnel, or extra materials, so you will need as much space as you can possibly get. Inside storage space is just as important. Depending on the location and security of your maintenance compound, you will want to store as much equipment inside as possible, for security purposes. Nothing can ruin a tournament faster than vandals intent on stealing or damaging the equipment, costing you time and money.

Next, check out the repair shop. Is it well equipped? Do you have all you need to keep your equipment running properly? Do you have on hand the equipment necessary to make quick repairs during the tournament, to ensure smooth operations? Consider such items as rapid reel grinders, hoist and lift tables, adequate tools and tool storage, good lighting, and a spacious, well-organized workspace.

Then move on to your chemical storage and mixing facility. Depending on the type of event, you may be hosting spectators, the media, club officials, and guests at your maintenance facility. You want to make sure that everything is up to code, clean, neat, and safe.

EVALUATING EQUIPMENT NEEDS

The main question to ask here is, do you have enough equipment on hand to ensure a successful tournament? To answer this:

1. Itemize the jobs that need to be done and the time frame in which they must be accomplished.
2. Identify the equipment needed to complete each one.
3. Review your equipment inventory in terms of how you want to condition the golf course for your tournament. How much additional equipment might you need? Where will you get it?
4. Identify any missing pieces and start calling vendors to find those who might be willing to loan them to you. If you cannot

make appropriate arrangements with vendors, contact other local golf course superintendents and ask if it would be possible to borrow the necessary items for the duration of your event. Determine whether any of your equipment needs replacement, and how much it will cost (see the sidebar, “Budgeting for Equipment Replacement”).

While you are doing your equipment inventory, don’t forget to check the condition of each piece. Make sure it’s all up to date and in good running order—even if it is only going to be used as backup.

BUDGETING FOR EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT

Here’s a good rule of thumb to follow in regard to equipment replacement and your capital budget: your annual capital expenditures for equipment should be approximately 10 percent of the total value of all of your equipment. For example, if the total value of all of your maintenance equipment is \$1 million, your annual capital expenditure on equipment purchases should be \$100,000 per year.

An efficient way to keep track of your equipment is to create a spreadsheet that lists each piece of equipment, its purchase date and purchase price, the expected replacement date and price, and its serial number (see Table 1.1). Using this type of inventory checklist makes it easy to stay current, as well as to prepare a five-year capital improvement plan.

TABLE 1.1. EQUIPMENT INVENTORY SPREADSHEET

<i>Item</i>	<i>Purchase Date</i>	<i>Purchase Price</i>	<i>Replacement Date</i>	<i>Expected Replacement Price</i>	<i>Serial Number</i>
Toro Grn Mwr	3/10/04	\$ 4,200	3/2011	\$ 5,000	12687
Jac. Triplex	4/3/05	\$18,000	4/2010	\$21,000	J2309
JD Tractor	2/10/96	\$26,000	2/2011	\$37,500	JD33210

Your equipment inventory must also take into account the tasks you will need to perform each day to prepare the golf course for the tournament along with the time frame in which these tasks must be completed. Assume, for example, you have two fairway mowers, and that it takes your staff eight hours to mow fairways. Now assume the tournament has an 8:00 a.m. shotgun start and you plan to mow the fairways prior to play. In this case, you will need two additional fairway mowers.

Don't underestimate the importance of utility vehicles. They will be used to transport your staff as they go about their daily tasks, as well as to take care of all of the extra chores that inevitably arise as the tournament date nears. Likewise, consider whether the facility will need to accommodate outside groups that will, for example, be putting up tents or setting up staffing areas around the golf course. If so, these people will also need carts for transport. Bottom line: Be sure to have an adequate number of utility vehicles on hand for both staff and tournament committee participants.

EVALUATING STAFFING NEEDS

At the same time you are evaluating your equipment needs, you should do the same for staffing. Think about the number and type of tasks that will need to be done to meet the goals that have been set forth for your event. Do you have enough personnel to achieve those goals? If the answer is no, where will you get the additional help? Again, consider contacting local course superintendents to see if they might be willing to send members of their staff to your facility for the morning or the evening maintenance routines, for example. If this is not possible, you need to know well in advance of the event so that you can hire the staff you need through staffing agencies and/or enlist the help of volunteers.

If you will be counting on volunteer assistance, don't wait to create a sign-up form and distribute it. Hand it out at chapter meetings, email it to golf course superintendents and industry members, and post it anywhere it is likely to be seen. Include on this form the dates of the tournament, available shifts and the time of those shifts, the number of people you need for the shifts, and any other pertinent information.

Once you have your temporary staff lined up, whether volunteers or employees from other golf courses, it's critical that you set up informational meetings with them. To best match these "temps" to tasks, and to ensure full-task coverage, at the first meeting, ask them to fill out a background information sheet, on which they should be asked to describe their availability (days and times) and their capabilities. Make sure, as well, to get detailed contact information from them. You want to be able to reach them at a moment's notice for any number of reasons, such as if weather will cause a delay or cancellation to tournament play, or if you find yourself short-handed at the last minute. (Email is very effective for this type of communication.)

At a subsequent meeting, it's your turn to distribute information to your volunteers and "borrowed" employees. Start with the basics, including clear directions to your golf course and start times for morning and afternoon schedules. Then pass out individual assignments—the days and times each volunteer will be working and their specific tasks. As a courtesy, distribute a list of everyone's contact information, in case people want to carpool to the event.

CONDUCTING A GOLF COURSE INVENTORY

You will need ample time to conduct the golf course inventory. Begin by traveling around the golf course; stand on each tee and in the landing areas, and imagine the shot from the player's point of view. Ask yourself:

- Will the player not see any hazards lurking at the edge of the fairway or green?
- If there is a hazard in front of the tee or bisecting the fairway, has the vegetation grown up so much that the player will not be able to see the golf ball land?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, begin now to plan the necessary steps needed to correct the situation.

As you travel the golf course, check out the boundary markers; make sure that both the rules officials and players can see from stake to stake, and that the vegetation between stakes has

been trimmed. Make a final trim of the boundary areas approximately 10 days to 2 weeks prior to the event, so that if the boundaries are to be painted, this can be done after the areas have been trimmed for the last time prior to the event.

Likewise, inventory your greens, tees, fairways, roughs, and bunkers, and make notes of anything that is not tournament-ready. (Note: Tees, fairways, roughs, and bunkers are covered in detail in Chapters Four and Five.) Of primary importance is to identify dangerous trees, any areas that might need to be protected from spectator traffic, and other growth that may need to be trimmed (see Figure 1.1).

Focus on young trees that may be staked or have guy wires supporting them. If the wires or stakes cannot be removed, you may want to work with rules officials to establish a policy for addressing the situation when a golf ball enters the area where the

FIGURE 1.1. DURING THE GOLF COURSE INVENTORY, IDENTIFY AREAS THAT NEED TO BE TRIMMED. IN THIS PICTURE, NOTICE THE BUNKER ON THE LEFT THAT WOULD BE HIDDEN IF THE TREES WERE NOT TRIMMED BACK.

