



# Doing the Most with the Little You Have

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# A Little Background

- Eagles Ridge Golf Club was opened in 1978 as Grandview Golf Club.
- It was constructed by the owners of Hepburnia Coal Company after a stripmining operation was completed on the land.
- The course was designed by James G. Harrison and is an 18-hole layout.
- The course is located in North Central Pennsylvania, about an hour to the west of State College.
  - GO PENN STATE!!!!!!

# A Little Background

- The course was purchased by new owners in 2006.
- By this time the course had been seriously neglected for 5-10 years.
- I began work on the course April of 2007.
- This was my first appointment as a superintendent.

A scenic view of a golf course. In the foreground, there is a large green fairway with a sand trap. In the middle ground, there is a clubhouse building with a green roof and a blue flag on a pole. The background is filled with dense trees, some with autumn foliage. The sky is overcast.

# Course Goals

- **The management's goal for the course is to present a product that offers the highest possible play value for the dollar.**
- **My personal goal is that people who play the course for the first time enjoy themselves enough to want to return.**

# Budgetary Restrictions and Challenges

- Eagles Ridge is located in a remote area.
- The closest towns are Curwensville (pop. 2439) and Grampian (pop. 405) which are about 7 miles apart from one another.
- The closest cities are Clearfield (pop. 6108), which is 15 miles away, and DuBois (pop. 7574), which is 22 miles away.
- Clearfield County is an economically depressed area.

# Budgetary Restrictions and Challenges

- The normal rates for an in-season round of golf are \$32 for a weekday and \$38 for a weekend.
- The 2010 approved maintenance budget was \$111,087.68.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- Time vs. Money
  - It is absolutely essential to realize that money is *not* on your side, so make time your ally.
- Patron Expectations – Use them to your benefit
  - Deliver what the patrons expect, not what you expect!

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- Planning
  - This is easily the most important aspect of operating with limited resources.
  - Know where every dollar of the budget is going prior to starting the season.
    - Every dollar should have a home in an all-inclusive formal written budget.
    - Much like the Constitution, a budget is NOT a suicide pact!
      - BE PREPARED TO ADJUST!
  - Bid and shop everything.
    - Send a “needs sheet” out to the chemical suppliers you deal with an exact tally of what you will need the next year, then compare the prices that come back.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- Prepare an expenditure calendar.
  - Provide detail on which date all the items of the budget will be purchased.
    - This makes the start up in the spring much easier when revenues are low.
- Prepare a labor plan.
  - Detail when various labor practices will be executed on the course.
    - This includes all fertilizer & herbicide applications, cultural practices and equipment maintenance.
    - Though this will not be followed to the letter, it will be useful in making sure things are done in as an efficient way as possible.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- **Labor**

- **Eagles Ridge uses a very small labor force to maintain the course.**

- **The crew is made up of 3 “senior” positions and 3 high school positions.**

- **The advantage of using a high percentage of high school labor provides a significant reduction of unemployment costs and a good work force pool.**

- **The disadvantage is that high school labor cannot start until around the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and are finished around the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.**

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- The crew is phased in during the season.
  - This starts with one “senior” crew member coming on during the middle of April, the other 2 beginning at the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, and the high school laborers beginning the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.
  - The course is expected to be in its prime by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of May.
  - This phasing in approach allows more room during the early season when revenues are still slow to come in.
- All the crew members are released in the middle of October.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

## – Crew wages

- The wages at Eagles Ridge are very low, which is keeping in line with its budget.
  - The highest paid crew member earns only \$8.75 and hour and has been working on the course for over 10yrs.
- Resultant from this situation I employ a strategy that I refer to as “Enhancing the Stupid.”
  - Even at low wages the crew is still responsible for maintaining the golf course to the highest standards that can be achieved.
  - Keep the place light!

» It is imperative that the crew *wants* to be working at the course given this situation!

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- **Fertilizer and Pesticide Usage**
  - **Employ the Environmental Advantages**
    - **Eagles Ridge is positioned atop a hill where the wind is usually blowing.**
      - **The wind movement decreases the amount of foliar wetness, which helps to prevent disease activity.**
        - » **This is a handy scenario for running a low budget course!**
  - **Curative Approach**
    - **A curative pesticide program is the only reasonable option for maintaining a low budget course.**

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- In addition to the curative approach is a solid scouting program.
  - There are three greens on the course that are the first to show signs of pathogen activity.
  - When those greens begin showing signs all the greens will be infected in the next 48hrs.
    - » This approach allows pesticide applications to be made at the absolute most effective time without any significant damage occurring.
- In 2010 the total amount spent on greens fungicides, herbicides and insecticides at Eagles Ridge Golf Club was \$877.33. This is mostly due to employing a curative approach combined with effective scouting.
- **Bio-Tea**
- This program was undertaken in an attempt to improve root mass on the greens throughout the season.
  - It was initiated in place of a commercial rooting program because of budget restrictions.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- **The program was derived from an episode of “This Old House.”**
  - Harvard University grounds maintenance group was trying to “go green.”
  - They began using a bio-tea formula to promote root growth and resist stress in place of traditional fertilizers.
    - The original formula consisted of the following:
      - ✓ 24ozs of fish hydrolysate
      - ✓ 24ozs of kelp extract
      - ✓ 24ozs of molasses
      - ✓ 10lbs of compost
      - ✓ 100gallons of water
- » This was mixed together, allowed to aerate for 24hrs and then sprayed on the turf.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- Their results were significant and, I thought, worth applying to my greens.
- The program I developed differed from Harvard's.
  - The expense of Harvard's program was still too great for my budget, so a different approach was taken.
    - »The liquid products of fish hydrolysate and kelp extract were replaced with fish meal and kelp meal.
    - »The 24ozs of fish meal, 24ozs of kelp meal and the 24ozs of molasses were blended together in a 5 gallon bucket and allowed to decompose outside the back of my maintenance barn for one week.

# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- » This resulting mix was then strained into a old metal tank filled with the appropriate amount of water and a mesh bag filled with 10lbs of compost.
- » This mixture was agitated for 24-48hrs. It was sprayed on the turf every 2 weeks throughout the season.
- The Bio-Tea was used in place of water as the carrier for the tank mix.
- The results of the program were significant.
  - The course applied 34% less iprodione in 2010 than 2009.
  - The course applied 33% less chlorothalonil in 2010 than 2009.
  - The course applied 40% less propiconazole in 2010 than 2009.
  - There was a reduction of 31% fungicide active ingredient applied in 2010 compared to 2009.
  - There was a reduction of 23% fungicide active ingredient applied in 2010 compared to 2008.



# Tactics for Making Those Dollars Count

- The total program cost \$223.00 and saved approximately \$400.00 in fungicides.
- The benefit of the program has thus far been in the reduction of fungicide.
- Although the greens as a whole did demonstrate good stress tolerance in this difficult season, the jury is still out on the root development.

# The End

- The tactics that I have presented have allowed me to successfully do the most with what I have.
- I hope that they will provide you with some useful approaches to the issues that you face.

**We Wish You the Best for 2011!**

