

Weather or not??

“Two of the biggest challenges in golf course management are staff and water management”.

Few would disagree with this statement because the protection of your most prized asset is fundamental to a club's entire existence. Every manager knows that quality staff enhances productivity and reputation, yet very few understand the weather. Would you engage staff without references, interviews, and proper assessment? Yet weather forecasts are accepted without any understanding of how they are produced, where they come from, why they are prone to error, indeed where the forecast is actually for.

Is your club one that displays weather on your web site that is forecast for a location up to 100 miles away? You probably don't know because you have not read the small print but are employees, members, and visitors making decisions based upon such flawed information?

Look at the BBC web site. The weather displayed is for the nearest meteorological station, wherever that may be. Accuweather and Metcheck invite post code entries but in reality the forecast is to the nearest grid point used by an American model. Where is that? It could be more than 40 miles away.

Then there is the media. How do you accommodate “thunder showers in your region” within your business? Are the storms widespread? Is the rain heavy? It is all so vague yet the effect on your business can be dramatic.

Case study:- a 36 hole competition during a club's Open Week saw thunderstorms develop by midday with the regional forecast suggesting storms not clearing until the evening. The second round was abandoned, and refunded green fees, pre-paid dinner, and loss of bar takings was about £3000. Yet a more bespoke forecast would have provided information that the storms would clear their course by 2-15PM and allow play to resume.

What of course management? The cost of a single treatment to rectify disease attack is about £800. Why not ensure it is applied at the most beneficial time with reference to an accurate weather forecast based on the Club's actual location?

The members are most clubs lifeblood. Why not provide them with the best information possible, even if they are not playing the weather has a fundamental effect upon their lives. Internet booking is used at more than 500 clubs to capture the 70% of golfers who are non members. Statistically 90% of these book up to four days in advance and weather will dictate where and when they will play.

The GCMA recommended to its 17 Regional Secretaries they consider inviting a meteorologist to one of their meetings to discuss these issues. They believe a better understanding of the weather would be a positive advantage to their members, and more information relating to lightning would address many Health and Safety concerns.

Finally consider this. Weather forecasts are plentiful and free. Why then do companies like EDF, National Grid, Thames Water etc pay tens of thousands of pounds for a temperature and rainfall forecast? It is because they know for every £10 spent they save at least £100. Similarly the PGA and R&A pay for weather information because they recognise its importance and impact upon players, courses, and spectators. I would suggest that clubs entertain a similar vision and embrace a better weather forecast within their business model.

Its value would exceed cost many times over and the investment would cost significantly less than you think.

I would recommend any club to contact a proprietary weather company like Weatherforgolf.com, find out more information, and request a free trial.

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Editors note – Martyn following 13 years at Hesketh Golf Club is now an independent consultant on Golf Club Software applications. He, with a number of North West secretaries worked with the Met Office to assist in developing weatherforgolf.com Operational Service a bespoke live system which is based on the exact latitude and longitude of the specific club giving a 6 hour forecast in video. Weatherforgolf.com also provides a free Phone App, Desktop and Website Links. For your free trial log on to www.weatherforgolf.com and register for the Operational Service and quote The Golf Club Secretary in the Comments box.