

Golf maintenance continues to keep operating costs low

By Todd Mathews, Golf Course Superintendent

The golf course maintenance staff at Lake Tansi has been working to keep maintenance expense at a minimum during these tough financial times. They have always been able to provide quality golfing conditions while working within a modest budget. The maintenance budget at Lake Tansi is significantly lower when compared to other courses in the area of the same caliber. It just keeps getting more difficult, year after year, to provide quality conditions as several uncontrollable factors occur.

As the golf maintenance budget has remained lean over the last few years, the cost to operate a golf course has drastically increased. Fuel, fertilize, pesticide, and material prices have skyrocketed. The minimum wage increase affected labor costs. Equipment and parts prices have increased. Every aspect of course maintenance has been affected by price increases, causing maintenance cut backs to be dramatically accentuated.

Working with a modest budget has been difficult for the golf maintenance department. It is an enormous challenge to continue providing top quality playing conditions on a reduced budget. But so far they have been able to do so. The staff has had to redesign their maintenance strategy and come up with some innovative ways to accomplish their goals at a lower cost. A few of the adjustments the staff implemented in 2010 include:

- Reduced the payroll expense through rescheduling work plans, reducing hours worked, and freezing any pay increases
- Increased the size of many natural areas on the course, thus reducing mowing labor, fuel costs, fertilization, and weed control
- Skipped fairway mowing 1 day per week
- Reduced bunker raking
- Skipped a scheduled lime application
- Removed improvement projects from the budget
- Reduced labor and fuel costs during leaf season
- Many other budget cutting strategies too numerous to mention

The staff continues to strive towards keeping Lake Tansi the best golf course in the area. As supply prices continue to increase and the maintenance budget remains status quo, golfers will eventually see a decline in the condition of their course. It is the goal of the maintenance staff to fight the inevitable and not let a decline become apparent. The staff has many years of experience maintaining the course and they, better than anyone, are equipped to see Lake Tansi golf course through this tough financial period.