

**BRUCE BARILLA**

Bruce Barilla has consulted at over 60 clubs. As a courtesy, he provides many complimentary teaching tools for a better locker room at: www.lrcgolf.com

Locker Room or Locker Gloom?

I find golf locker rooms intriguing. When you enter, there is a feeling of exclusivity because not everyone is allowed inside. Being a private place within a private club makes them even more interesting.

Size alone does not determine the “wow” factor. New is not always better, and remodeling can do more harm than good if not done properly. Older locker rooms often have strong aesthetic appeal.

What makes for an impressive locker room rather than a gloomy one? Having been to 173 clubs and continuing to research many more, I will share what I have seen, learned and recommend.

WHAT DO I MEAN BY LOCKER GLOOM?

The overall impression is lack of care. Poor lighting, frayed or dirty carpet with traffic patterns, beat-up lockers, stained shower curtains, dollar-store amenities displayed haphazardly and worn bathroom fixtures all contribute. Gas-station-style paper towel dispensers do not help. Neither does a part-time attendant who spends more time in the shoeshine room than on the floor. A prospective member may choose not to join a club based on the locker room alone.

to air out, adding to both function and appearance. Decorative trim that serves no purpose can interfere with usability.

CEILING HEIGHT AND OVERALL VIEW

High ceilings are less common but immediately impressive. The right paint colors can create a striking contrast with lockers and flooring. One club I know had five-foot metal lockers with vents, allowing golfers to see and talk to one another, strengthening camaraderie. A tiered ceiling and complementary lighting enhanced the effect. Years later, the club lowered the ceiling and installed seven-foot wood lockers, changing the entire atmosphere. The new space looked nice, but the sense of connection was lost. A full gut renovation is not always the right answer. It takes an architect with both vision and restraint to leave well enough alone.

A FEW QUICK FIXES AND A WORD ABOUT SERVICE

A locker room that delivers a great shower experience is more appealing than one that does not. I recommend towel and robe warmers and a refrigerator for chilled towels near steam, sauna or whirlpool areas. Quality grooming and shower amenities also matter, as does using cloth towels at



OLDER LOCKER ROOMS AND AESTHETICS

I like the old metal lockers found at many private clubs. They often have more interior space and features than new wood lockers. Replacing larger lockers with smaller ones disappoints members and invites complaints. Sometimes all it takes is a fresh coat of paint, which can save the club well over six figures. Some clubs frame locker sides with solid wood trim. Flat-top lockers allow shoes to be placed on top

sinks. An older locker room with excellent service is better than a beautiful one with poor service. Hire and fairly compensate employees who care about doing a great job.

At one private club in South Carolina, a men’s locker room in poor condition had 100 unrented lockers. After renovation, there was a waiting list. The gloom was gone and members returned. At your club, is it locker room or locker gloom? **BR**