



Number 4 has it all... pines, palms and year-round bentgrass greens.

Pines, Palms, and Pennncross



Bent Pine Golf Club

Vero Beach

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

In the late 1970s several farsighted members of the John's Island Club in Vero Beach realized that the continued growth of their community would create overcrowding on their courses. They seized the opportunity to purchase and develop a tract of land just west of town. Their vision became a reality when the Indian River Country Club opened in 1978. A few years later the named changed to the current Bent Pine Golf Club.



Number 15

Year-round bentgrass putting surface over a Tifdwarf bermuda base

Bent Pine Golf Club

PHOTOS BY DAN ZELAZEK

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The club is situated on the western flank of the great sand ridge that runs along Florida's east coast. This ridge is home to other well-known area courses like John's Island West, Hawks Nest, and Sandridge GC that lie just to the north and east of Bent Pine. The native vegetation ranges from pines and palmetto woods on the east side to a prairie/floodplain dotted with cabbage palms and wax myrtles to the west. Indian River citrus groves and CIBA's Vero Beach Research Center can be found north and west of the property.

The Bent Pine Golf Club falls into that group of private clubs that maintain a year-round bentgrass putting surface over a Tifdwarf bermuda base.

"June is the worst month for us," says superintendent, Scott Bell, "I tell the members that June is a great month to take a trip! Almost 90 per cent of the membership is gone by then anyhow."

"A busy day for us in the summer months is maybe 20 to 30 players. They know our post-season renovation is always the first week in June. That signals the time when we tend to lose patches of bentgrass on five or six of our greens."

'The greens that are out in the open are quite healthy'



Number 14 from green to tee.

“Contrary to popular belief we do not raise our height of cut very much in the summer. I feel the taller cut creates a micro-climate more conducive to disease than the shorter cut...”

The other 12 greens are pretty good all summer!”

Why try to keep the bentgrass all year?

Scott explains, “It dawned on me one summer a few years ago when Tim Hiers declared he had finally gotten all of the bentgrass overseeding out of his John’s Island greens. It was August. I said, ‘Tim that’s great, but you’re going to be overseeding again in a month and a half.’ That’s when we decided to see if we could maintain the bent all year long.”

“These are not USGA greens but they were rebuilt in 1986 with 18 inches of 90-10 soil mix. The problem greens are the ones nestled in pockets in the trees which results in poor air circulation. We are going to try a couple of fans on the worst ones to see if they help prevent unwanted transition.

“The greens that are out in the open are quite healthy. The only other major problem in the summer is brown patch disease. I have been very happy with the control provided by a 16:1 mix of Daconil to Rubigan. We have also used Prostar 80 with good results.

“Contrary to popular belief we do not raise our height of cut very much in the summer. I feel the taller cut creates a micro-climate more conducive to disease than the shorter cut.

“We do back off on mowing frequency on the problem greens until the underlying host bermuda has re-established itself. That is the most trying time for me. No superintendent likes to see bare spots on his greens, but the

members are very supportive and they appreciate the eight months of bentgrass greens that we produce for them.”

Scott's fertility program is a recipe of spoon feeding that he has found to be quite successful even if it is labor intensive.

“We only apply granular fertilizer to the greens twice a year. We use Ringer's at 1 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet. Every two weeks we apply a complete liquid fertilizer, Envirogreen, and on the off weeks we apply a low nitrogen high potassium liquid or a minors blend, usually with iron or manganese. The total nitrogen for the month will only run between 1/8 to 1/4 pound per thousand square feet during the peak bentgrass season.”

“Like the other clubs that manage bentgrass, we have a special set of circumstances agreed upon by the members. They know we will have to endure a certain amount of transition in June and July, but again most of the members are

“Like the other clubs that manage bentgrass, we have a special set of circumstances agreed upon by the members.”

gone. Bentgrass greens in Florida are not a reality for clubs with high-volume, year-round play!”

Scott acknowledges that other southern or Sunbelt states have bentgrass greens. Why then does Florida seem to struggle more with bentgrass?

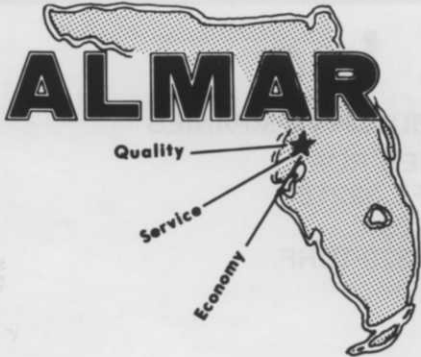
“I firmly believe the unique difference is our latitude and the effect of the sun's angle, Scott explains. “We are exposed to

more relentless heat and humidity all summer than other locations. Other areas of the country do get hot and humid, but not for the same lengths of time. Our relationship to the equator guarantees our weather pretty much all summer!”

Forgetting the bentgrass for a moment, Scott and crew face the usual challenges of maintaining a golf course during a wet summer.

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Number 8.

*The Bent
Pine course
has very
few exotic
plants or
annuals*

“It has rained every day since last Friday,” he says with a shrug. “It’s really difficult getting through some of the fairways. We also have large rough areas to maintain.”

“On some days, we may have as many as five people mowing the bermuda and bahaia roughs. Last night we didn’t get a lot of rain, but we had a pretty good windstorm as you will see. We only lost one tree, but we will have lots of pine needles to clean up before we can mow.”

“You know what pine needles can do to those reel mower bearings!”

“We have begun a program to prevent pine tree decline which can be a problem on golf courses. We have created pine straw beds under groups of trees and around individual trees to help keep the pH more acidic, which they prefer.”

It also keeps traffic off the root systems around the trees. The pine straw beds also give us a place to blow and scatter pine needles that we clean up after storms. We

‘We have begun a program to prevent pine tree decline which can be a problem on golf courses.’

have modified our irrigation system by installing part-circle heads near the trees to avoid overwatering. We also have about 100 key trees fitted with lightning protection.”

The Bent Pine course has very few exotic plants or annuals planted on the course. There are a couple of beds that are maintained during the winter, but they are allowed to lie fallow during the summer. The only exception is the clubhouse area which is accented with Washingtonia palms, flowering trees, shrubs and annuals.

There are also very few houses bordering the course, and these have generous set-backs and are screened with lots of landscaping to break up the roof lines.

As we rode around the course, I was envious of the very obvious lack of weeds. Scott says his herbicide program consists of a pre-emergent application of pendimethalin in mid-January each year for *Poa annua*. His timing must also catch the early germinating goosegrass and crabgrass. If he does have any problems in the warm season, he spot treats with MSMA.

Bent Pine also alters their routines and equipment during the year. In the

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Number 18 and the clubhouse.

summer, the tees are mowed with triplex mowers. During the winter, a fleet of 11 green and tee walking mowers is trotted out to accomplish that manicured look.

On the fairways a seven-gang Parkmaster gives way to a pair of lightweight five-gang mowers to stripe the overseeded

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The crew at Bent Pine GC.

Bent Pine Golf Club

Location: Vero Beach, Florida.

Ownership: Member owned

Playing policy: Private - No tee times.

Management: Clubhouse Manager, Jack Grant; Golf Professional, Pat Gorman
Club President, Robert Irwin; Greens Chairman, Joe Van Sickle.

Designed by: Joe Lee.

Opened: 1978, 18 holes. Originally called Indian River Country Club.

Renovations: Rebuilt greens in 1986. Currently, resodding greens collars-6 holes per year to remove 419 contamination.

Acreage: Total turf = 160. Lakes = 26 acres.

Tees: 2 acres, Tifway 419. HOC = .350. Overseeded w/Laser Poa trivialis.

Greens: 2.5 acres, Tifdwarf. HOC = .110 (January to June 6 - .125). Average size = 5,000 square feet. Overseeded w/Penncross creeping bentgrass @ 5 lbs. per 1,000 square feet. Winter green speed 10 - 11.5.

Fairways: 50 acres of Tifway 419, HOC = .500.

Roughs: 90 acres of Tifway 419, HOC = 1.50. 30 acres of Argentine bahiagrass, HOC = 3.0

Irrigation: Source: Artesian well. Pumps: 1 - 25hp; 2 - 50hp w/Autoflow Special Control Panel. System: Toro Osmac w/600 heads covering bermuda turf only.

Staff: Assistant Superintendent, Donnie Kouns (8 years). Equipment Technicians: Head Technician, Dwayne Keeling; Part-time assistant technician, Bob Kalin. Pest Control Technician: Sam Hooker. Irrigation Technician: Billy Gondek (8 years). Graduate of GCSAA, Toro, and Autoflow irrigation seminars.

Total Staff: 15, including superintendent.



The Scott Bell family.

Scott Bell

Originally from: Ohio. Attended High School in Ft. Lauderdale.

Family: Wife, Debbie. Children: Jennifer(10); Sara(8); Scott(6); Allison(1 1/2).

Education: BS Landscape Horticulture from Colorado State University 1981.

Employment: Bent Pine G.C. since 1986; TPC at Monte Carlo, Ft. Pierce (2 Senior PGA events and 1 Senior Qualifier - Supt. 8/84 to 5/86); TPC at Eagle Trace, Ft. Lauderdale (1 Honda Classic - AS 3/83 to 8/84); The Pinery Country Club, Denver, Colorado (C.C.A. - AS 1981-82).

Hobbies/Interests: Golf (12 handicap); Yamaha Waverunner; coaching soccer, home improvement projects, travel, snow skiing.

Professional affiliations: FGCSA - President; Treasure Coast Chapter - all board offices; FTGA - Government Relations Committee; Indian River School Board - Gifted Student Task Force.

Memorable moments: Taking the Eagle Trace course from "dirt" to a PGA tour event site in one year was rewarding. Turning a bankrupt course into the TPC at Monte Carlo and hosting a PGA Senior Tour event was also a great feeling. Rebuilding the greens at Bent Pine to provide better playing conditions for the members has been fulfilling.

Advice: Remember, the customer comes first! Whether it's a member, a guest, or a daily fee player, we work for the golfer and they pay the bills!

Mentors: **Dr. Jack Butler** at Colorado State got me to switch over from an overcrowded forestry major to a six person turf program. I never looked back. **Fred Klauk** emphasized the importance of having very good greens as well as a manicured course. **Gene Burkholder**, a former greens chairman, taught me the art of diplomacy within the private club setting.



Numbers 9 and 18. Note the Martin house on Number 18.

As we headed back to his office, Scott showed me one of his two successful purple martin houses...

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links.

As we headed back to his office, Scott showed me one of his two successful purple martin houses. This one was located on the lake bank of the 18th hole. He pointed out that the martins love to be near the water and out in open areas away from surrounding trees.

Scott added, "They are really a sight in the morning as the whole flight swoops and turns. When the sun flashes on their iridescent purple color, they're spectacular. I read that each purple martin can eat over 2,000 mosquitoes a day. That's a great benefit for simply mounting a bird house on a pole!"

Back in his office, Scott discussed his coming year as FGCSA President.

"The number-one mission of the FGCSA will always be to promote and educate the superintendent. We have made great strides in improving the professional image of superintendents.

"Right now, we should all be involved in taking a proactive stance on environmental issues. The FGCSA has and will con-

tinue to be a force in the search for better and safer ways to manage turf. While, we continue to actively raise funding for research, we must also support our lobbyist, Mike Goldie, in Tallahassee. Legislators need to hear both sides of each issue before heaping more business strangling regulations on our club's backs."

"We share funding of the lobbyist with the Florida Turfgrass Association. The FTGA is made up of members from all aspects of the turf industry including superintendents. I would like to see even more superintendents join and support the FTGA.

The FTGA is uniquely staffed and positioned to address large-scale issues that affect the industry. We are all anxious to see the results of the Turfgrass Economic Impact Survey that will help quantify the real financial value of turfgrass to the citizens of Florida."

"In this time of environmental sensitivity, it is critical for every club and every superintendent to do what is right. Superintendents with proven leadership skills are an asset to their clubs in this age of OSHA, ADA, and EPA activism." 