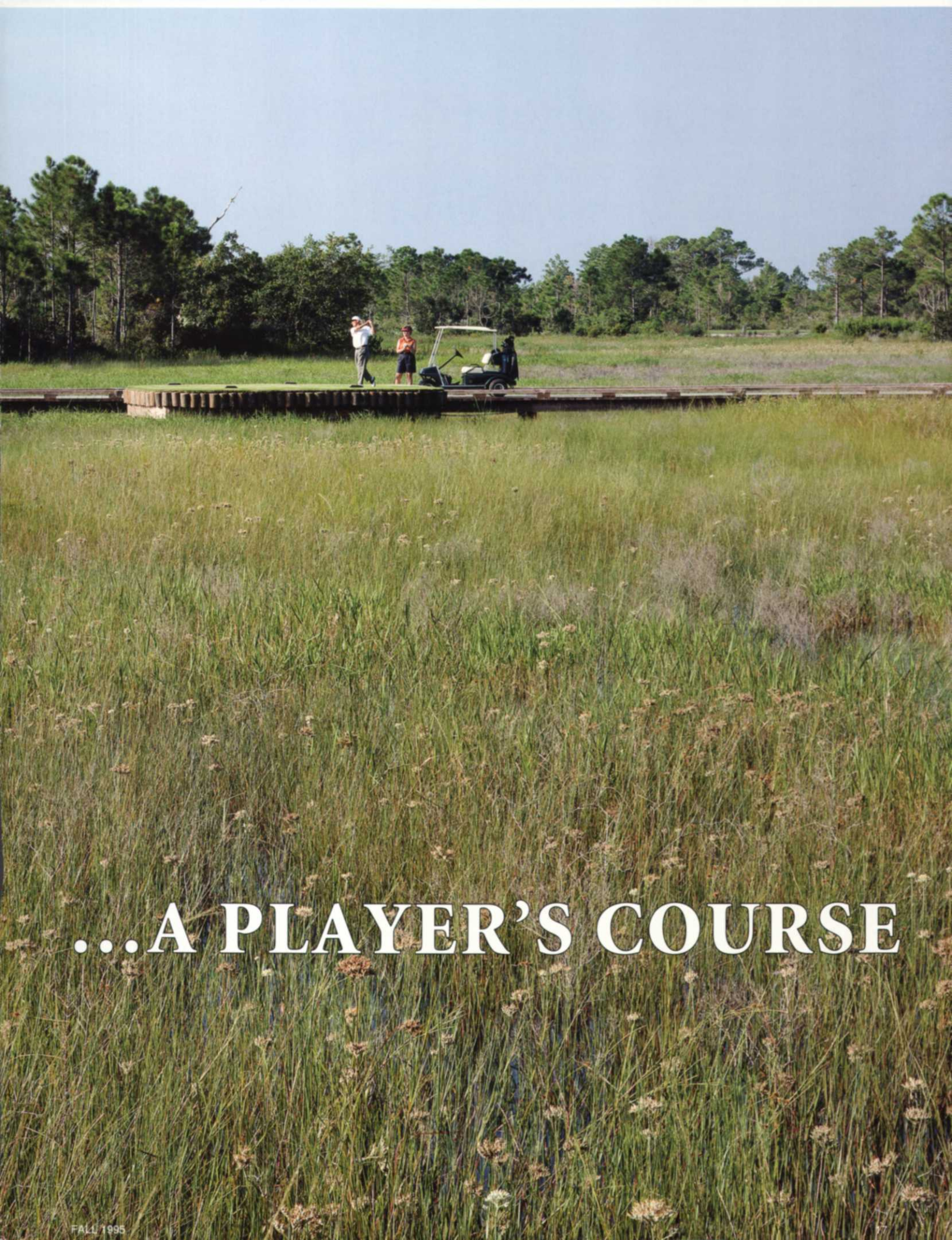


THE MEDALIST GOLF CLUB



...A PLAYER'S COURSE

THE MEDALIST GOLF CLUB

Risk, reward, shot selection, course management and creativity required

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

GOLF COURSE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY DAN ZELAZEK

'No artificial signage or accessories. Small cut up branches for tee markers. Simple split log benches at the tees. No concrete. No asphalt. All natural.'

Photo on previous two pages:

The Medalist Golf Club

Hobe Sound

Hole #9

Photo by Dan Zelazek

"This is a player's course. The highest member handicap I've seen is a 15," says Greg Plotner, CGCS. It is quintessential target golf created in this pristine setting by Pete Dye and Greg Norman. Risk. Reward. Shot selection, course management and creativity required. The seven acres of Tifdwarf approaches and greens surrounds inviting all sorts of bump-and-run and pitch-and-run shots. Caddies are available.

The Medalist Golf Club holes wind back and forth like emerald ribbons through the sandy pine woods of Hobe Sound. Forty acres of turf nestled strategically among the palmettos and scrub oaks. The unique scent of wild rosemary thickets giving the visitor a gourmet's "taste" of the course to complement the sights and feel.

No artificial signage or accessories. Small cut up branches for tee markers. Simple split log benches at the tees. No concrete. No asphalt. All natural. The crushed shell paths, leading from the greens to the next tees, stop at the fairways. The subtle rolling and undulating fairways rising and falling, twisting and turning through the trees and around the marshes. There are no roughs. Native grasses, deer moss, wildflowers and aquatic plants punctuate the natural areas and marshes with texture and color contrasts. Stacked sod wall bunker faces offer a unique feature seldom seen on a Florida golf course.

There are many unique things about The Medalist and that suits Superintendent Greg Plotner just fine.

"Your work is never really done on a golf course, but after nine years at Tampa Palms, I'm enjoying the construction phases of this project," Greg said.

"It's not often one gets to help create and leave his mark upon the land. I really

like it."

Greg gives his wife, Nadene, and son, David, a lot of credit for his being at The Medalist.

"This move is a tremendous opportunity for me at this time. But to take advantage of it, I needed the support of my family," he said. "Like so many others, we were a two-career family with an active teenage son. We talked about the pros and con's, and they backed me 100% to make the move. I can't tell you how proud and grateful I am for their unselfish support."

Greg's plate is full as he takes on the task of finishing the construction and grow-in of The Medalist, and at the same time assumes the presidency of the FGCSA. Another unique aspect to this story is the recent entry of Greg's boss, Greg Norman, into the turfgrass industry by starting the Greg Norman Turf Company.

Norman has shown a keen interest in working with the FTGA and in becoming very involved in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. It is always refreshing and heartening to find out that you have a proven golf champion that is interested in the finer points of turfgrass management. We welcome Greg Norman into the fraternity of turf professionals and we appreciate his support.

My visit to The Medalist was on the Friday after Tropical Storm Jerry drifted nonchalantly across the state. If you looked west you could still see the backside of the slow moving system, purple-gray with rain. In fact, I drove down from Orlando through bands of overcast and rain.

It wasn't until I passed Vero Beach that I caught a glimpse of a sunrise trying to break through the leaden sky. We are once again approaching record rainfalls



Above, Hole #4. An emerald target in a sea of sand.

Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

*Hole #6.
Nestled among the
pines and palmettos.*



Photo by Daniel Zelazek

Close mowing is a way of life at The Medalist

There are no plans to overseed the course in the winter, so it will play firm and fast

for the second summer in a row and we all need a break to grow some good turf before fall.

Excessive rainfall was exactly what was challenging Greg on this morning. We hopped in his golf cart and headed for the primary retention area and irrigation lake for the course.

"We are required to contain all of the storm water that falls on the course under the original guidelines of the permit. All of our drain basins are interconnected and pumps deliver all the storm runoff to the retention area," Greg explained.

"Unfortunately, the retention area does not have enough capacity for these severe thunderstorms. We are in the process of redesigning and enlarging the retention lake.

"After the modifications, we are going to be able to direct some of the runoff into a wetlands rehydration system approved by the South Florida Water Management District. Currently, the only option I have to deal with the overflow is

to flood the driving range, and that's a no-win solution."

As we rode the course, I was pleasantly surprised at how well it drained. The morning rainfall had percolated quickly except around some of the drain basins which were working slowly because of the capacity shortfall.

"Actually the soil drains so well that we have to really keep an eye out for the large areas of Tifdwarf. I have seen some spots turn blue in a matter of hours on a hot day. It almost reminds me of managing a bentgrass green in the summer," Greg added.

Close mowing is a way of life at The Medalist. With a fleet of twenty hand mowers, sixteen triplexes, and two 5-gang lightweights, the tallest cut is only 1/2 inch, and that is for summer fairways. There are no plans to overseed the course in the winter, so it will play firm and fast.

Those large Tifdwarf approaches we mentioned earlier extend out 10, 20 and 30 yards from the green and create yet



South Florida Turf Products INC

1-800-432-2214

1-407-622-0667

**Distributors for
Howard Fertilizers**

**QUALITY FERTILIZERS & CHEMICALS
FOR THE TURF INDUSTRY**

P.O. Box 8081
Jupiter, Florida 33468

Predictable Results.

In managing golf course turf, it's what matters most. As specialists in turf care, we look long and hard for products that are truly superior before we present them to you. We insist manufacturers prove their claims in the lab *and* the field, because we're committed to your results - on your course and for your bottom line. Call. Let us demonstrate the terrific results you'll get with these technically superior products.

AXIS[™]

Amends soil to give you more leeway managing the crucial air/water balance in root zones. Aerify, rototill, topdress. More porous than clay-based amendments. Does not compact. Proven effective in USGA greens.

BREAK-THRU[™]

The most effective wetting agent known to science (that you can afford). Proven safe. Decrease pesticide use while increasing effect. Save 40% or more on soil conditioning. Affordable dew control.

AGRO-TECH 2000 Inc.

PLAINSBORO, NJ

1-800-270-TURF

Available in Florida from: • GO-FOR SUPPLY 1-800-475-7081
• DICK BLAKE 407-736-7051



Hole #12. Note the natural accessories on the tee blending with the woods and wetland.

Photo by Daniel Zelazek



Hole #11. Stacked sod bunker walls are definitely a different look in Florida.

Photo by Daniel Zelazek



Photo by Joel Jackson

Greg Plotner shows Shelly Foy the bordered bunker walkway on hole #4. Note the crushed shell cart path in the background.

another management challenge.

At the Tifdwarf and 419 boundary, bio-barrier fabric and an edging slit have been installed to prevent 419 encroachment into the Tifdwarf. The bio-barrier fabric extends ten inches deep and prevents the stolons from growing under the Dwarf. The edging slit allows for mechanical cutting of any surface runners that try to grow over the top. Greg says they run the edger a couple of times a week in the summer when the 419 is most aggressive.

As I mentioned earlier, there are no roughs. The fairway cut stops abruptly at what Greg calls a *hard-line edge*, which is the look that is desired. The area beyond that is a cleared, natural sandy area which must be kept weed free except for the native grass accents. Right now Greg is experimenting with Round Up, Gallery and Barricade. He says they will do a little more under brushing along the deep woodline before the October 15th opening. He supplements the native pine needles with pine straw to prevent *fried egg* lies in the sandy areas.

We all live and learn with each project,

and The Medalist is no exception. The lesson of proper plant selection was learned. The folks who were hired to salvage and replant indigenous native grasses mixed upland and wetland species. Broom sedges planted on a mound under irrigation grew so much they blocked focal points and altered shot values. Everything is being sorted out and each species is being relocated into its proper habitat.

Back to some of those unique things about The Medalist. Stacked sod wall bunkers. I have read about them. I have seen pictures of them. Now, I have been up close and personal with them. For an old flymow man, Greg is finding managing them a bit of a challenge.

"They have been labor intensive for us," Greg said. "Some of the Dwarf walls dry out and collapse. We have experimented with rebuilding with clay based sod, if you can find it, and putting terra cloth between the layers. That has helped.

"We are also trying Tifgreen 328 for a little more aggressive rooting. Another problem is the stolons and roots that grow out and trail down the face. We're

trying to work out a solution. After all, it's a different grass type than is normally used in this application."

Speaking of bunkers. The bunker sand is mostly native sand, which packs nice and firm. There's an interesting feature in some of the large bunkers that guard an entire side of a green: a bordered walkway from the cart path to a ramped foot path on the side of the bunker face. It appears to be some 1-by-4s buried on edge defining the walkway. A ball coming to rest in the walkway is dropped in the bunker without penalty.

Greg has a couple of fairways planted in a new bermudagrass called GN-1. So far, he rates it excellent for preventing weed encroachment. Even more interesting is the lack of mole cricket activity compared to same age Tifway 419 fairways. The only problem he has encountered is maintaining color on some areas. It may be a simple case of an iron or manganese deficiency.

Conversely, on the 419, Greg has been battling some fairy ring problems. Potassium applications have helped prevent rampant mushroom development. Monthly soil and tissue samples have not revealed any obvious causes. A Pro Star fungicide application cleaned up a fairy ring outbreak on the greens.

As we finished our ride through the course, Greg showed me the clubhouse site overlooking the eighteenth green.

"The clubhouse should be ready by April first," he explained. "There will also be eight cottages for guests. Right now we are going to have to move some more soil to build the practice green so it will blend into the putting surface of number eighteen. It will be similar to the layout at Oakmont. At the same time we have to build a retention area to collect the runoff from the clubhouse area. So, you can see we have lots to do around here for awhile!"

It was exciting and interesting to see this new course taking shape in the Southeast Florida woods. The vision and dreams, the hopes and expectations of new owners and a new superintendent becoming a reality. A player's course for people dedicated to golf.



Photo by Joel Jackson

Greg Plotner points to the edger slit access that allows management of the 419 Tifdwarf contact zone in front of each green.

GREG PLOTNER, CGCS

Originally from: Lincoln, Illinois

Family: Wife, Nadene. Son, David, 13.

Education: B.S. in Plant and Soil Science, Southern Illinois University, May 1981.

Employment: Irrigation technician, Wadsworth Construction, 1 year. Assistant Superintendent, Sweetwater CC, Sugarland, Texas, 4 years. Superintendent, Tampa Palms G & CC, 9 years. Superintendent, Medalist Golf Club, May 1995 - present.

Hobbies/Interests: Fishing, golf.

Professional affiliations/Offices held: Current President of FGCSA. Past President of Florida West Coast Chapter. Past Chairman of Green Industry Advisory Council, Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Honors: 1993 National Winner of Environmental Stewardship Award, Best Private Course (Tampa Palms). First certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program in Florida, (Tampa Palms). CGCS status since December 1991.

Memorable moment: Caddying for Arnold Palmer on opening day at Tampa Palms.

Personal philosophy: Work hard, but take time to enjoy life. Sometimes it's hard to do but it must be done.

Introduction to the business: My Grandma Plotner always told me about a cousin of mine who built golf courses for a living. Well, I met that cousin, helped build a course and here I am today at the Medalist Golf Club — proud as can be!

Mentors: The road to success started with my mother and father. They provided me with a good upbringing, a quality education and constant support. Next comes my family. New opportunities sometimes require relocation — Nadene and David have never said no. I love them more than words can say for allowing me to advance my career.

Advice: Get a quality education. Work for a proven superintendent. Develop good relationships with others in the field. Be a leader and act like someone who you would want to work for.



Photo by Dan Zelazek

Managing clean, hard-line, fairway edges and native soil roughs will be one of many unique challenges on Hole #3.

The Medalist Golf Club

Location: Hobe Sound, Florida

Playing policy: Private

Management: Golf Professional, Buddy Antonopoulos

Designed by: Pete Dye and Greg Norman

Constructed by: Jason McCoy

Opened: January 1995

Acreage: Total turf = 40 acres.

Greens: 1.8 acres, Tifdwarf. HOC = .120 - .150. Average size = 4,350 square feet. No overseeding. Green speed 8.5 or better.

Tees: 2.2 acres, Tifdwarf. HOC = .250 - .375. No overseeding.

Fairways: 25 acres, 419 Bermuda and GN 1. HOC = .375 - .500. No overseeding.

Approaches: 7.77 acres, Tifdwarf. HOC = .250 - .375. No overseeding.

Irrigation Source: Effluent, groundwater. **Equipment:** Rain Bird Maxi 5, Flo-Tronex Variable Speed Pump Station.

Staff: Total of 24, including superintendent. Assistants, Charlie Jones and Howard Hulsebosch.

Unusual conditions: Two types of fairway grass planted, 419 and GN 1. More than 11 acres of Tifdwarf to maintain. Maintain stacked sod wall bunker faces.

Grow-in incident: Hosted Shell's Wonderful World of Golf, March 1995.

Mowing/Maintenance equipment: **Greens/Tees:** Walk mowers, 20 units total. **Fairways:** Off-season, 3235 John Deere, 2 units. In-season, Lesco Tri-Plex, 16 units. **Approaches:** Lesco Tri-Plex, 16 units.

Cultural/Pest Control/Fertility programs: Practice IPM. Use organic and slow release fertilizers as much as possible. Monthly soil and tissue sampling.

Wildlife management programs: Limited clearing of native areas. Mitigation underway for created marsh areas. Restoration underway for upland areas.

Water quality management: All storm water and irrigation water must be contained and not allowed to discharge into wetlands at this time. Eventually a new retention system will be in operation for the course which will allow for stormwater and irrigation water to be treated on-site and then used to rehydrate wetland areas.