

GTE Suncoast Classic

TPC of Cheval Tampa Bay, Tampa, Florida

Superintendent: Chuck Green

Chuck Green arrived at TPC Cheval just in time to get the course ready for the Senior PGA Tour qualifying school, the qualifying finals and the GTE Suncoast Classic all back-to-back. He credits his Assistant, Scott McEwen for working a "trillion hours" to make it all successful. Little did Chuck know that Central Florida's "one week of winter" was just about to happen.

The Senior Tour officials requested a green speed of 9.5 on Cheval's severely undulating putting surfaces. To achieve this, Chuck began mowing ten days before the event, twice daily, with walking mowers with verti-groomers set 1/32 below the bedknife. During the tournament the greens were double cut in the morning and evening to keep the speed consistent.

Five days before the tournament, that "week of winter" I mentioned earlier, arrived. The course suffered two frosty mornings and a six hour freeze. The turf went off-color. Fortunately, the temperatures bounced back rapidly and the turf responded to be in great shape for the competition. No rabbits out of the hat, no cards up the sleeve, no smoke, no mirrors. Just patience in dealing with Mother Nature and having faith in your programs.

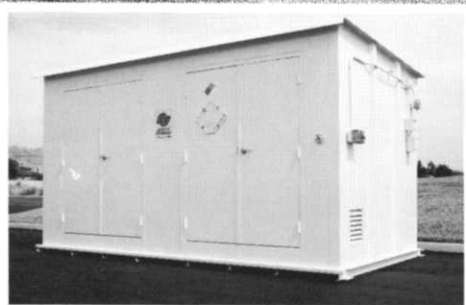
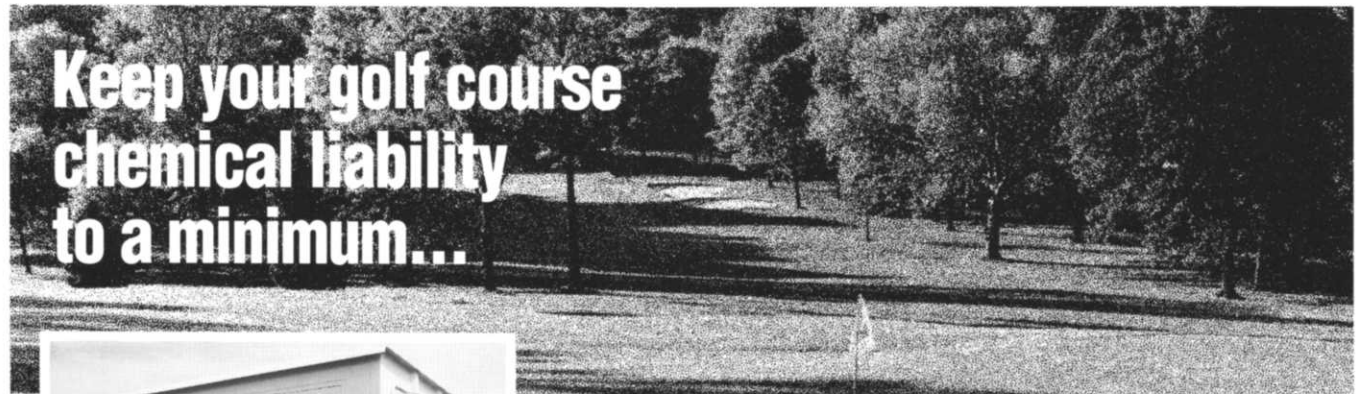
Yes, faith and a full staff of 20 people who worked two shifts

daily. Starting each day at 3:30 a.m. and working till 9-10 a.m. Then back again at 3 p.m. till midnight. Everybody worked a 7 day week and put in 80-100 hours. Chuck also said that the loaner equipment he had available was a must for the success of the operation. The only problem encountered was with the night work. One operator misjudged the distance of an oncoming vehicle in the glare of the headlight and turned into some curbing and damaged a reel. That's one of the pitfalls facing any operation that has to rely on lights to get work done for special events or dawn tee times.

The weather turned out great for the event. The galleries were estimated at nearly 200,000 for the week ranking the tournament in the top three in attendance.

In fact, crowd control was a concern to Chuck as curious onlookers strayed into areas that were being mowed in the afternoons. But the crowds also saw Dave Stockton Sr. fire a nine under score to win the event. No time to rest for Chuck. He's on his way south to grow in a new TPC course. Former Central Florida superintendent, Steve Sorrell, returns from South Carolina to take over TPC Cheval.

*Joel D. Jackson, CGCS
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