

The Florida Tour: Part 2

March Madness brings best out of Florida Superintendents, Golf Courses

Say "March Madness" to 90 percent of the population and they'll tell you it's all about the NCAA Basketball Tournament. Say it to golf course superintendents in Florida and they'll tell you it's the spring fling of the PGA Tour as it travels from Miami to Jacksonville. Here's part 2 of our coverage of the 1995 professional golf tournament sites in Florida.

Doral-Ryder Open

Doral is a name that is synonymous with great golf and a great golf course, but this year's Doral-Ryder Open showcased a golf course that was well beyond anyone's expectations. Thanks to Superintendent Pat McHugh, CGCS, and his staff, the Blue Monster was in the best shape that anyone has seen for many years, including myself, and I have been around Doral since 1979.

Pat, a 1977 graduate from Michigan State's turf program, made a bold decision this past winter to oversee the entire course for the first time. Pat's gamble paid off in a big way. With the cold, wet winter south Florida endured, the rye

grass overseed was the perfect vaccine for a predominantly Ormond bermudagrass course that may have suffered severely.

Pat is no stranger to the PGA Tour, having worked for the Tour for one year at the Tournament Players Club at Southwind, home of the Federal Express St. Jude Classic. Pat was working at Hunter's Run when he decided to accept the position as Director of Golf Maintenance at Doral.

Due to the Blue Monster's unique makeup of mostly Ormond turf, Pat's decision to overseed the entire course was based on the idea of trying to put its best foot forward. "We wanted to put a different touch on the place," McHugh said.

The 328 greens were seeded with a fescue and poa mix at about 24 pounds per 1,000 square feet, adding 2 to 3 pounds monthly. The tees were done with a 70-30 mix of rye and poa at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Fairways and roughs were done with straight rye with rates of 400 pounds and 250 pounds per acre, respectively.

With a first time project came different work patterns that required the crew to establish new work habits and techniques. The tees were now being walked mowed, the roughs cut with rotaries and the fairways mowed, amazingly, with

triplex greens mowers. Because of the overseeding, the fairways were being mowed everyday to create that checkerboard pattern that everyone likes to see. It took eight machines 4 or 5 hours to mow them all. The greens are being cut at .141 mm to get them up to 11 on the stimp meter. Pat uses all liquid fertilizer on the greens so they can be maintained right up to tournament time. With the quality of the overseed, the greens should be spectacular, probably the best on tour.

The large amounts of rain experienced this winter may have been a blessing in disguise for the Blue Monster. Due to the timing of the rain and the overseeding, there have been no carts on the course's fairways since November, making them absolutely perfect. "We could be stronger looking, if not for the rain," McHugh said. This is hard to imagine, though.

With the Doral facility incorporating 81 holes, it is not hard to find men to supplement the 16 full-time crew members that work on the Blue Monster. This time of year is not easy on Pat and assistant Eric Von Hofen. The Doral staff is responsible for putting up the fencing and ropes around the course, leader boards and concession areas. The TV towers are left up year round so all they have to do is put the floors in. For weeks before the tournament, the crew will work 10- and 12-hour days preparing. During

the tournament, they will work split-shifts to get everything mowed and cleaned up after each round.

The Doral maintenance crew has traditionally enjoyed this time of year, but with about 70% of the crew being new, no one knows quite what to expect. Much time has been spent by Pat and Eric finding out who can operate what and where. On Saturday of tournament week, the crew will hold a large party and celebrate what will definitely be a successful event.

Pat has had some help, though. This past summer the PGA tour came down and helped to reshape some of the fairways. Tour Agronomist Jeff Haley comes in early to assist, and Hector Turf has donated some equipment to make life easier. Some of the equipment includes a lightweight mower, two 3100 greensmowers and four Toro 1000 walk mowers.

Kenneth Lee Dixon
Hollybrook CC

The Honda Classic

At Weston Hills, perfection is expected from the golf course, and the man entrusted with that job is Dan DuPree. Dan has represented himself well once again with an outstanding golf course that lives up to the grueling expectations of the PGA Tour and the membership.

I am a little ashamed to admit that this was my first visit to Arvida's beautiful facility at Weston. Being a fairly new course, Weston has some advantages that a lot of us do not. Dan gets to work with all new equipment, and plenty of it. Dan has a 21-person crew, expanded to 30 for the tournament, for an 18-hole facility that will soon be 36, as nine new holes have just opened.

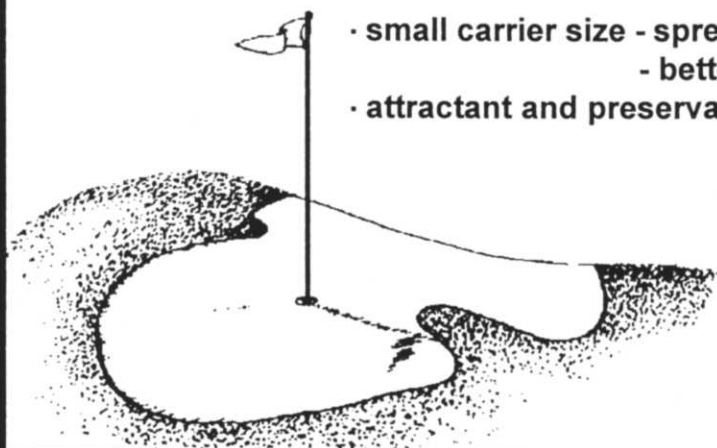
Dan, who graduated from Lake City in 1973, has been at Weston Hills for three years now. Before that, he served as superintendent at Broken Sound for eight years and, before that, eight years at The Diplomat. The Honda Classic is the first

PGA event that Dan has been associated with, but the experience has been a great one. "I really enjoy it. If you don't enjoy this time of year, you definitely don't need to be in this business," DuPree said.

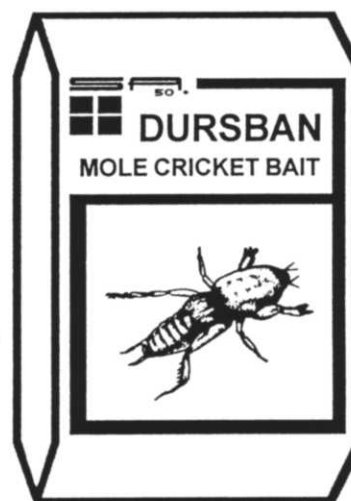
The course at Weston Hills is all bermuda with 419 on fairways, tees and roughs. The greens are Tifdwarf that have been overseeded with straight bent. The tees and fairways are cut at .375 mm, the roughs at 2.75 inches, and the greens at .141 mm. The greens should be more than adequate for the pros, with a stimp meter reading of about 10-10.5.

The tour has some stringent demands, and the crew at Weston has been able to adapt to those demands. The fairways are being double cut everyday, and the greens walk mowed. Carts will be on "paths only" for a month before the tournament begins. An 1.25 inch step cut is cut around the fairways. The crew, which will pick up many overtime hours in the weeks prior to the tournament, will be working a split-shift during the tournament. The

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