



Tom Trammell, CGCS, Metrowest's Course Superintendent, stimps the 15th green as part of his crew works on the fairway and tee boxes.

Pot bunkers, storms and other challenges preparing for tournament play

BY CAROL BARFIELD

It was around midnight this past March when Tom Trammell, CGCS, knew for sure he had trouble on his hands.

The rain had been coming down in sheets for hours and now, as he rolled over in bed and checked the clock, it was showing no sign of letting up.

What the seasoned golf course superintendent knew for sure was this: His challenge to prepare MetroWest Golf Course for one of the club's largest and most attended events of the year had just

increased substantially as more than four inches of rain deluged the course in one night.

With the Celebrity Golf Association event just days away, the 86 bunkers that dot the course would not be pretty come dawn, to say the least.

"The rain? Yeah, it totaled some of our bunkers," Trammell said with a smile. "MetroWest has some wonderful hills on the course, but when the heavy rains ran off those hills into nearby bunkers, it

washed a few of them out. We had about 30 to 40 hours of extra work ahead of us to put it back into condition before our players and guests arrived. So we just got going. We rebuilt some faces and we had to resod bunkers lips," he explained.

Rebuilding parts of a golf course was not on Tom's list of things to do to prepare the course for a tour event, but he says that's just the point. "You have to stay on top of what you know is coming, because in this business there are just too

many unknowns.”

Getting MetroWest’s 220 acres of Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed course ready for the CGA event included putting up show fences and more than 12 miles of ropes, posting hole signage, erecting leader boards, and a host of other last minute necessities. The roping of the course may have been the most obvious change, but behind the scenes work on the greens, tees and fairways had been going on for some time.

Jim Karvellas, Commissioner of the CGA, said his staff had been meeting with Tom for more than a month, identifying course conditions that needed improvement and watching Tom coax and nurture Mother Nature along.

“We are always striving to keep our greens in top shape,” Trammell stated. “In this case, as we approached a transition period, we were working to keep the winter grass with us.”

Their special attention paid off, for when a host of celebrities, media and fans came together on the course March 21, the course’s eighteen varied splashes of emerald green were well appreciated.

“The players commented very positively on the greens,” explained Karvellas. “These are golfers *and* celebrities, so they have the opportunity to play the world’s finest courses. They openly said that MetroWest had some of the best winter greens they had seen all season.”

And just how fast were the greens to be cut for the CGA event? “The tournament organizers wanted them a bit faster than we normally keep them,” Tom said. While regular members and guests find the course greens running at 8 or higher, the MetroWest maintenance team was asked to have the greens stimping between 10.4 and 10.5.

With the day’s events beginning early each day, Tom was faced with the challenge of having the course prepared for play with first sun. MetroWest’s 50 acres of fairways posed a particular challenge, which the crew met with an unconventional solution. “Yes, we worked at night,” Tom recalled, laughing. How? “We had infrared sunglasses. . .” he attempts before a shy grin emerges. “With floodlights on the equipment, you can mow in

the middle of the night.”

The fairways, it turned out, were also well praised during the CGA event. Tom explained, “At MetroWest our fairways are seeded at a very high rate, then cut lower than three-eighths of an inch.”

The result on this one? Tournament players said they found MetroWest to have some of the truest fairways playing conditions they have ever seen.

Trammell admits that creating tournament playing conditions demands grueling hours and team commitment. It also takes a blend of scientific and creative problem-solving related to turf growth and maintenance. Yet the Florida native was all smiles as he recalled the event. “We loved it. It is a great motivator to have a challenge such as this. Our staff really came through,” Trammell said.

And what about Karvellas and his CGA event? “We’ve held our Central Florida tournament at MetroWest for two years now and our players love it here. We consider MetroWest our Central Florida home, and we’re looking forward to coming back,” he added.

Those words will be music to one course superintendent’s ears.

Editor’s Note: Last year we did a series on the traditional LPGA, PGA and PGA Senior Tour sites. With the popular growth of the Celebrity Golf Association, it seemed only fitting to run this story submitted by freelance writer, Carol Barfield, to complete the picture. MetroWest was also one of the courses played in the GCSAA Golf Championships this past February. Congratulations, Tom!

Turf Trivia

Temperature Modification

All plants play an important role in controlling climate. Turfgrasses are among the best exterior solar radiation control ground covers because of their capacity to efficiently intercept solar radiation.

Since turfgrasses effectively cover the ground surface, little radiation is lost or not utilized — and each blade of grass acts as an evaporative cooler. An acre of turf on a summer day will lose about 2,400 gallons of water through evaporation and transpiration to the atmosphere, which can dissipate approximately 50 percent of the sun’s heat.

When the temperature of the sidewalk or street is well over 100 F, the temperature at the surface of turfgrass areas will remain around 75 F. It has been estimated that on a block of eight average houses, front lawns have the cooling effect of about 70 tones of air conditioning (the average home-size central-air unit has a three- to four-ton capacity).