

Every Day is Special

BY LAURIE FRUTCHEY

*Golf Course Superintendent
Black Diamond Ranch*

AS TOLD TO LISA A. SWING

*Horticulturist
Black Diamond Ranch*

Black Diamond Ranch is a privately owned 27 hole golf course (soon to be 36 holes) located in Lecanto. It is owned and operated by Stan Olsen. We have the distinction of being ranked number one in Florida by *Florida Golfer* magazine and as high as number four in the United States.

On any given day, you will see me or any of my supervisors out working along with the rest of the crew. It may be manual labor or the intricacies of teaching proper operation of equipment. I believe a working boss is a respected, knowledgeable boss.

Our normal working routine starts at 6 a.m. Monday morning. At this time, my

assistant superintendents (or myself) arrive to write up a daily work schedule.

We have our "original" Quarry Course, which is built around an abandoned limestone quarry. George Moorehead, one of my assistants, handles the scheduling for these 18 holes.

The Ranch Course is currently a 9-hole layout with a natural woodland setting. An additional nine holes are under construction. Maintenance schedules on the Ranch Course are handled by Kirk Osborn, also an assistant superintendent.

Our crew, consisting of 43 full-time employees, is at work between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. They get their assignments or do their own jobs starting at 6:30 a.m.

Morning jobs are listed for golf course maintenance staff. Nineteen employees, plus myself and two assistants, are responsible for the morning jobs.

They prepare their tools and equipment according to their assignments. These jobs consist of cutting cups, mowing greens (either walk mow or triplex), filling water coolers, emptying trash buckets, raking sand traps, moving tee mark-

ers, etc.

Morning jobs are finished within two to three hours. During this time, we note other jobs to be completed and schedule appropriate employees to each task.

Quarry wall cleanup is one job we have here that most courses don't have to contend with. Holes 13 through 17 are constructed around the natural aquifer lake that is the core feature of the back nine. Quarry walls some 60 feet high create a stunning backdrop of natural and manmade beauty. Certain areas of these walls (only where it's safe!) are string-trimmed and brush-bladed down to give a better vision of the boulders and trees that line them.

Spring and fall are the heaviest growth periods so this is a job done on a regular basis during those seasons.

Our crew breaks for lunch at 11:30 a.m. We take a half hour lunch and resume working at noon. We then work until 3 p.m. This is the regular schedule for Monday through Thursday.

On Fridays, the crew leaves at 11:30 a.m. for the day. The crew is split in half

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for weekends. They work a half day on Saturday and Sunday every other weekend so that their time equals 40 hours per week. They start at the same time as weekdays and do the morning jobs and leave by 9:30 a.m. weather permitting.

Other divisions of the maintenance program include a golf course/landscape horticulturist, Lisa Swing, and landscape supervisor, Jim Jarrett.

Horticultural aspects include planting and maintaining all annuals in the complex and other sites located on various properties nearby. A crew of three is included in this division.

Landscape pertains to all common ground areas, entrances, sales office, model homes and pro shop and lounge areas of the clubhouse. A crew of nine represents the landscape segment.

We have three full-time mechanics led by the head mechanic, Don Hespeler. This crew is responsible for conducting daily preventative maintenance on the equipment and trouble shooting and solving equipment failures in the field.

Crew meetings are held "as needed," usually every two to three months. This helps to keep all employees informed on company policies, staff changes, extracurricular activities, safety guidelines, etc.

It is also an opportunity for group questions and answers, complaints and frequent thank you's for jobs well done. Our supervisors meet at least once a month to cover any changes, share information and discuss morale builders or other related matters.

Course inspection is done daily. My

assistants, supervisors and I keep up on what has been done and needs to be done so that it can reflect on our scheduling for assignments. Woody Wilson, who is our spray technician, uses his eyes to spot any weed, insect and disease trouble on the course. Handled properly and efficiently, these "problems" are not quite the headache they could be.

We're in constant communications with pro shop personnel, as well as each other, via radio communications. Sprinkler heads running or a missing flag pole can sometimes be noticed quicker by a golfer and reported. Information obtained from the pro shop (tee times, last golfer, etc.) is valuable to us during our watering, overseeding or spraying.

Special events for Black Diamond include several major member and member-guest tournaments. We also host the Big League Challenge-Dodge Shootout and the Ted Williams Celebrity Tournament.

Events like these give our crew a chance to shine. Black Diamond is a gem among many and for most, to see it for the first time is breathtaking. It is always nice to hear compliments on the hard work we've done all year long. Even though we're proud of outside compliments, our members' opinions are of the utmost importance.

Each one sees the course on a regular basis and it's their opinions that have the most impact. But for the members who see it every day, to give compliments, is very special.

Therefore, special events are treated

as a usual day. Major differences are pulling in everyone from all divisions to get the golf course ready to play for earlier tee times and shotgun starts.

We hand rake traps that are usually done with the sand pro. We double walk mow greens to give them a nicer appearance and a smoother faster roll of the ball. All areas are checked and double checked so we know the course is in the best possible shape.

Sometimes it can get very hectic if a problem arises with a walk mower, so we keep a mechanic out on the course with a radio if he is needed for a quick repair. Backups are ready in the shop if a breakdown requires a major repair.

All in all, things run smoothly and it's nice to know your job is done for the day and we can turn the course over to the pro shop personnel.

Paperwork is an everyday tribulation. Our very able secretary, Margaret Sterbenc, has all paper work laid out on appropriate desks to be reviewed and signed. Reports and budgets are usually done in the office and at home.

Quiet time is the best time to dive in and accomplish mental tasks without interruption. Budgets are due on a monthly and yearly basis.

Continuing education has proven invaluable for me and my staff. From the mechanics to the landscapers, we feel that updated information and the latest technologies are very beneficial to us in our rapidly changing industry.

Time permitting, we try to attend all the special functions we can to enhance

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our skills and to gain knowledge. My assistants and I split time on association and chapter meetings. When I'm away from the course, I do call in to ease my mind to know that there were no major problems.

Mr. Olsen and our general manager, Jim Carman, encourage and support our staff to attend meetings and seminars. Positive influences are a great attribute to our careers here at Black Diamond.

On a negative subject, my worst nightmare was not on the golf course but on a more personal level. It came in the form of unflattering and derogatory remarks made by an unknown person.

As a new superintendent, I was anxious to prove my knowledge and professionalism. An attack on my character was not a good start for a boost of confidence. Terry Lagree, our general manager at the time, saw how this negativity affected me and he made sure we talked in depth until my uneasy feelings were resolved.

On that day, Terry helped me to un-

derstand that what is most important is how well I do my job by my own standards and not let jealousy or hatred affect my attitude. Since that day, I've not looked back.

That situation has given me more courage in situations to deal more fairly and open minded with all types of people. So my actual nightmare turned out to be a blessing. Not only did it give me the utmost confidence in myself but it showed me the faith and support that my bosses had in me. That type of loyalty and confidence is important in any type of business.

I feel stretched thin at times with so many demands on me and my time. Golf courses as beautiful as this one help to alleviate the stress. All it takes is time to reflect.

One long ride on a nice day, fresh air and sunshine in my face and wonderment that I can say, "I help to make all of this the way it is!"

That's reward enough.

It's a Jungle Out There

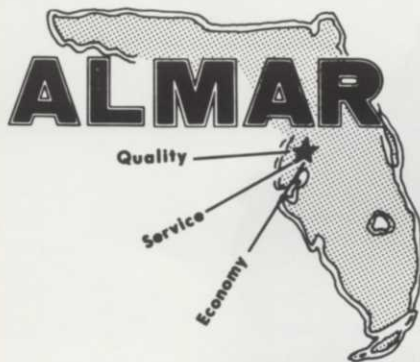
BY JOHN KOPAK
Golf Course Superintendent
Alaqua C.C.

When I arrive at work at approximately 6:30 a.m., one of the first things I do is check the phone messages. A common message may be a salesperson wanting to get together and talk about their products or an employee whose pet cat turned his or her alarm clock off by accident and they'll be running a little late.

But here at Alaqua, a common message might be,

- "John, it's Chef Robert. Could you get the raccoons out of my dumpster?" or
- "John, this is Mrs. Smith. Could you please get the alligator out of my backyard? It's chasing my poodle" or
- "John, this is William at the guard

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