

Kensington Country Club

A look at

11th green at sunrise.
Photo by Daniel Zelazek



at Naples' Future Today!

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

The Kensington Country Club is a perfect example of the booming growth and development of southwest Florida. The Lee and Collier County area now boasts the highest number of golf courses per capita in the state. According to local officials, the area is on track to surpass golf mecca, Myrtle Beach, SC in per-capita golf courses in the nation.

Kensington is located northeast of the heart of Naples between US 41 and I-75. Once an area dedicated to vegetable farming on the outskirts of Naples, Kensington is now in the middle of the large urban growth in southwest Florida.

Kensington also finds itself on the leading edge of the golf boom, and much to the delight of superintendent Scott Whorrall, he finds himself part of a ownership/management team dedicated to providing a quality facility. Whorrall says, "Our owner, Mr. Anton Steiner, sees that we have what we need

TURFGRASS PROBLEMS?

Why?

- Soil Conditions?
- Soil Fertility?
- Unavailable Nutrients?
- Drainage?
- Grass Quality?
- Irrigation Water?

TOM BURROWS:

Agronomist/Turfgrass Specialist

Consulting: Turfgrass • Soil •
Tissue • Water • Physical • Plus
USGA or Reconstruction of
Greens

Certified Brookside Lab
Consultant

36 Years Experience
Jensen Beach, Florida
Ph: (407) 692-1221

to get the job done and that makes it fun to work here. I can honestly say I can't wait to get to work each day."

Whorrall just celebrated his second anniversary at Kensington in February after moving over from his assistant superintendent position at the Olde Florida

Golf Club. General Manager Bo White echoed Scott's appreciation of the working relationships at Kensington,

"We do have a great team in place, and Scott is a sharp young man. We're fortunate to have him on board."

Visiting Kensington was an interesting contrast to the many older established clubs and superintendents that have been profiled in recent cover stories. As we get closer to the new millennium it was good to take a look at a slice of the future of our business.

Once inside Kensington's gates, the rolling Robert Trent Jones, Jr. design offers golfers and residents an exciting visual contrast to the naturally flat, piney woods of the surrounding area. There are always tradeoffs when you try to improve on Mother Nature. Those contours and slopes that provide interest and challenge to the golfers also affect Whorrall and his staff.

"We can't use any large pull-behind

(305) 581-0444

SPREAD-RITE, INC.

CUSTOM SPREADING
FERTILIZER • DOLOMITE • ARAGONITE

LAMAR SAPP

6001 S.W. 19th STREET
PLANTATION, FL 33317
MOBILE: (407) 479-9417

South Florida Turf Products

1-800-432-2214

1-561-746-0667

**Distributors for
Howard Fertilizers**

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

1800 Central Blvd.
Jupiter, FL 33458

Aquatic Management



- ✓ Friendly, professional service
- ✓ Competitive pricing
- ✓ Certified, degreed biologists

- ✓ Fast response time
- ✓ Free Estimates
- ✓ Since 1979

1 Month Free Service!
(New customers third month free)
Try Lake Doctors, mention this ad
and get your third month FREE!

Call

The Lake Doctors, Inc.

1-800-666-5253

www.lakedoctors.com

Scott Whorral

Originally from: Grant Park, Illinois.

Family: Fiance, Paige Barriteau.

Education: A.S. Golf Course Operations, Lake City Community College.

Employment

history: 1996 - present

Superintendent

Kensington Golf and Country Club, Inc.; 1993 - 1996 Assistant Superintendent Olde Florida Golf Club, Naples, FL; 1992 OJT Loxahatchee Club, Jupiter, FL; 1991 OJT Butler National Golf Club, Oakbrook, IL; 1988-1991 crew member Minnie Monesse Golf Club, Grant Park, IL

Professional affiliations: Member- GCSAA; FTGA; FGCSA Everglades Chapter.

Honors/Awards: Kensington being picked for Florida Green Spring 1998 cover story.

People who have influenced your life and career: My mother and father for supporting me through college and instilling a strong work ethic. Jim Gerlach, Superintendent at my first golf course for showing me the time, dedication and hard work it takes to be a successful superintendent. My fiance for tolerating, supporting and understanding the business.

How did you get into the business: I worked as a cart hustler at a golf course, and was offered a shot at mowing roughs. From that point on I knew what profession I was going to pursue.

Goals: To become certified, and to continue to strive to make Kensington the very best it can possibly be. **Philosophy:** Always keep an open mind. The business is changing so rapidly. Even over the past five to ten years, incredible strides have been taken. Also, no one works for me; they work with me. **Advice:** Surround yourself with other professionals.

Memorable moments: During the flood of 1995, over 44 inches of rain fell in less than three months. It was then that it really hit home: no matter how well you do your job, you are still at the mercy of Mother Nature in the end. It was the first and only time I've seen fish swimming on a green.

Hobbies and interests: Golf, baseball and boating.



mower combinations," Whorral explained. "We rely on 3- and 5-gang, self-contained, lightweight mowers to negotiate the slopes. The use of elevated tees, natural rock walls, and native grass beds also necessitates a certain amount of hand work in mowing, trimming, and spraying to maintain a detailed appearance.

"With the golf course such a focal point of the community, we have two people dedicated solely to landscape maintenance on the course and two people who do what I call 'development landscape.'

"They augment some of the work done by an outside contractor on entrance and common area ornamental beds. We also have one person dedicated to mechanical control of our waterways.

"We weren't satisfied with the degree of detail that our aquatic contractors could provide economically under contract, so we decided to tackle the maintenance in-house.

"Our spray tech does all the shoreline spraying where it won't affect the aquascaping. In the more sensitive and densely planted areas, our aquatic person hand-pulls and harvests obnoxious plants like cattails and torpedo grass.

"The torpedo grass is a legacy from the days when this area was a large tomato farm. We are looking into introducing grass carp to provide a three-prong approach: mechanical, biological and chemical control."

New courses always require some tweaking after they open and

Wildlife inventory

Member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Various bird boxes throughout property including bluebird, Great Crested Flycatchers, Screech Owl, Barn Owl, Wood Duck and bat houses. Multiple species of birds including wood ducks and resident ospreys. Raccoons, alligators, bobcats, rabbits, fox squirrels, various snakes and turtles.



The massive and well-appointed clubhouse overlooks the challenging 18th green. Photo by Daniel Zelazek

Kensington is no exception. The original concept of extensive use of bahia-grass in the roughs and on tee slopes became unworkable as residual weed seeds in the soil began to overtake the bahia.

"After fighting an almost losing battle trying to keep the weeds and mole crickets out of the bahia areas

that were in play, we decided to replace the bahia with 419 to provide a denser stand of turf," he said. "It has worked out well for us."

The southern part of the Florida peninsula has another natural challenge to be overcome: limestone. The bedrock under 90 percent of the state is limestone.

Formed eons ago in the warm, shallow seas that occupied the area, limestone offers two specific challenges.

First, anytime you dig a hole or a ditch, you usually have to use a jack hammer and second, the calcium carbonate composition of the limestone raises soil pH to high levels that have to be addressed in fertility programs.



Invigorate™
SOIL CONDITIONER

A new solution to soil drainage and compaction problems

What is it?

Invigorate™ Soil Conditioner is a unique liquid that opens up space between tightly packed soil particles by agglomerating fines into larger particles. Invigorate™ is not a wetting agent, but an innovative approach to drainage and compaction problems.

What does it do?

- Repairs the soil rather than impacting the water
- Similar to aeration but on a microscopic level
- Is taken down to the compacted or layered area by water
- Agglomeration of the fines creates new macropores and larger soil aggregates

What are the results?

- Agglomeration of fines creates new macropores
- Breaking into and through layers allows water flow to increase
- Downward movement of water draws air into the soil restoring balance of water to air
- Brings aerobic condition to anaerobic layers
- Positive environment for turf growth



Invigorate™
SOIL CONDITIONER

Contact your turf products dealer or call Milliken Chemical at 1-800-845-8502 for more information.



Aquascaping of this littoral shelf on hole #7 provides habitat for fish and fowl. Note that some of the wading birds are foraging in the fairway and roughs for insects. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



Once flat farmland, hole #2 wraps around a lake and skirts a stand of pine and cypress trees. The gently rolling golf course ties native areas to the growing Kensington community. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

The first problem, having bedrock so close to the surface, has caused Whorrall some extra work.

"We have added several miles of additional French drains in some of our low areas," he explained. "We indeed have to use a jack hammer when the trencher comes across a large boulder in the path of a drain line or new irrigation line we are trying to install. The thin soil cover over some areas just doesn't allow the heavy rainfall accumulations percolate, so we help by adding more drains."

A unique feature of the Kensington drain lines was the use of stucco lathe, a heavy gauge wire mesh, to cover the pea gravel in the drain lines. The mesh keeps the gravel in place undisturbed by mowers and vehicles and allows the drain to stay open for maximum infiltration of the runoff.

Thin soil cover on some areas of the course also haunts Whorrall during renovation.

Whorrall said, "After we do our sea-



Wetland bridge ties tee and green together on hole #3. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

sonal aerifications, we often have to go back over certain areas with buckets and hand-pick chunks of limestone pulled up by the tines. It's kind of tough on mower bed knives if we don't do it.

"It's just one of the extra procedures we have to do because the rock wasn't capped with enough soil during construction."

As far as high pH in the soil, Whorrall has plans to continue to use sulfur-based fertilizers and install an acid injection unit on his irrigation system to help lower the pH.

Whorrall knows that growing grass isn't the only challenge he faces. Managing people and the company's assets for productivity are also part of the daily puzzle a superintendent must solve. One of his decisions in this area was a simple but very effective one.

"We used to send out four hand greensmowers and two mechanical sand rakes each morning," Whorrall said, "Now we send out only one man

on a Sand Pro and he does only the fairway bunkers.

"The greensmowers mow each green and then hand rake the greenside bunkers. They are generally small, so it is not a big-time investment. We get a better result in the bunkers and we free up one man at the start of the day to get other projects done."

Getting things done wouldn't be easy for Whorrall without the help of his assistant, Paul Mollberg. "Paul is the key to our operation. He's unbelievable. I really appreciate what he gets accomplished for us."

Whorrall's crew — like so many these days — has an infusion of bilingual workers. Whorrall admits that he and Mollberg only *habla Espanol un poquito*, but the club offers English classes two nights per week to help the workforce become more effective employees and residents.

We mentioned earlier the support that the owner, Mr. Steiner, provides. One day he couldn't resist the tempta-

tion to get "hands on" with the golf course. Most of the fairway bunkers at Kensington are filled with crushed coquina shell.

Steiner just didn't like the look of this one fairway bunker complex with its white sand in contrast to the others, so he jumped on a bucket loader and cleared out all the sand, stockpiling it on a nearby vacant lot. Scott ordered more coquina and the conversion was complete.

Incidentally, those coquina bunkers serve as cart paths since there are no wall-to-wall paths on the course. The crushed shell is very firm so it adds a little roll to the tee shots and offers a good tight lie for recovery shots. Over 400 loads of the coquina shell were trucked in from Cocoa Beach during construction.

As a new head superintendent, Whorrall admits he learns something new every day and he pays tribute to the formal and informal education he has had along the way from mentors like superin-



Kensington CC

Location: Naples, Florida.

Ownership: Kensington Park Development Corp.

Playing policy: Private, 350 equity memberships.

18 holes: Par 71 at 6879 yards. Course Rating: 73.1 Slope Ratings: 135.

Designed by: Robert Trent Jones, Jr. Constructed by: Golf Forms, Inc.

Opened: January 1994.

Management: Anton Steiner - Manager Director; Arlette Steiner - Manager Director; Jeff Mangan - C.O.O./General Manager; Bo White - Club Manager; Head Golf Professional - Richard Erick.

Major Renovations/Projects: Over 2.5 miles of subsurface drainage, mostly in fairways in past two years.

Acreage under maintenance: 114 acres.

Greens: 2.7 Acres. Average size: 6,000 sq. ft. Turf type: Tifdwarf (Certified). Height of cut: Overseeded greens (.109 - .140), Summer (.150-.180). Overseeding: Cobra Bentgrass at 6 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft.. Green Speed Goals: 9.5 - 11.0 (Winter)

Tees: 3.5 acres. Turf type: Tifway 419 (Certified). Height of cut: Overseed (.250), Summer (.400). Overseeding: PhD Perennial Rye Mix.

Fairways: 30 acres. Turf Type: Tifway 419 (Certified). Height of cut: Winter (.450"), Summer (.400"). Overseeding: None.

Roughs: 70 acres. Turf Type: Tifway 419 (Certified). Height of cut: Winter (1.75") , Summer (1.0"). Overseeding: None.

Waterways/Lakes/Ponds: 54 Acres. Extremely high bicarbonates; currently installing pHairway injection system. We now maintain lakes in-house.

Irrigation: Source - Deep well. PSI pumping station. Network 8000 Control system. Toro 650, 670 series heads. 970 total heads 100% turf coverage.

Staff: Total including Supt. 23 including landscape crew. Assistant Superintendent: Paul Mollberg. Mechanic: Richard Hodges. Pest Control: Jeff Boswell. Irrigation: William Flippen. Administrative/clerical: Sabina Musci.

Others you may wish to recognize: Golf Forms, Inc. - Excellent course construction; no shortcuts. The ownership of Kensington is very willing to invest in the quality and maintenance of the golf course, and that makes it fun to work here.

Special or unusual conditions: Extreme elevation changes creates difficult-mowing patterns, watering practices and cultural practice situations. Some holes are built on only inches of fill over a limerock base making aerifications messy and trenching very difficult.

Interesting or unusual features: Over 400 semi-loads of crushed Coquina shell trucked in for waste bunkers from Cocoa Beach, Florida. Over one million cubic yards of fill moved during construction of golf course.

Maintenance equipment: Greens-Toro 1000 walkers year round. Tees-Toro GM 3100's May-October, Toro 1000's November-April. Fairways: Toro 5100's year round. Roughs: Toro 4500, Toro 2300, Toro 2600. Toro Workman Sprayer, Club Car and Kawasaki Mule Utility Vehicles

Cultural practices: Aerification - Greens 4x year with Toro Walk Aerifier. Fairways 6x year Toro 687. Roughs 4x year Toro 687. Verticut fairways 2x year, roughs 1x year.

Topdressing - Greens 15-18 times/year w/Terra Topper; tees, collars & approaches as needed. Spike greens 1x week on overseed. Annual Fertility - Greens-Nitrogen 10#/m²; Potassium 36#/m²; Foliar applications biweekly. Tees: 12-14# N/m² and 28-30# K/m². Fairways and Roughs 8-10#N/m² and 22-24#K/m². Supplemental fertigation for the above. Total IPM pest control approach including two wall-to-wall pre-emergent herbicide applications of Ronstar.

Kensington Snapshots by Joel Jackson



Because of the sensitive nature of the extensive aquascaping on the course, Kensington decided to do their waterway management in-house and use more mechanical controls. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Here's a great idea of using stucco lathe over the top of French drains to keep the pea gravel in place and keep the drain lines open for maximum efficiency. Photo by Joel Jackson.



A very unique location for a putting green! Photo by Joel Jackson.



Installation of Wood Duck boxes helps to further enhance the golf course habitat. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Limestone bedrock excavated during construction is used on several holes, shown here on #8, to stabilize steep lake banks and provide interesting texture contrasts. Photo by Daniel Zelazek



Without wall-to-wall cart paths, waste bunkers like these on hole #7 are used to keep traffic off the fairways. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

tendents: Jim Gerlach at his first course in Illinois; Mike Sauls at Butler National and Phil Shoemaker at Loxahatchee during his Lake City OJT and Darren Davis at Olde Florida as an assistant.

Whorrall continues to learn as he must also deal with the effects of El Niño on course conditions.

"We overseeded with a 90-10 mix of bentgrass to poa trivialis and it has been a very tough year to measure success. As you can see we have a tight surface but the overseeding is thinner than normal.

"We may try a 50-50 mix next year. The bentgrass tends to be very persistent and difficult to transition out in the spring."

Overall the effects of El Niño so far were minimal at Kensington. But Whorrall, like all good superintendents, will continue to fret and worry and be vigilant until the weather improves. Meanwhile, the future of Naples continues to unfold and Kensington and Whorrall play their part in the growth and development of southwest Florida.