



COVER STORY



Number 2 North
Par 3, 200 yards
Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



Killlearn Country Club

The Growing of the Green

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

With a name like Killlearn and a shamrock for a logo, it's not hard to conjure visions of the rolling green fields of Ireland when picturing what the Killlearn Country Club in Tallahassee must look like. The clubhouse, pro shop and 39-room inn painted white and trimmed in green sit on a hilltop northwest of downtown in a forest of oaks and



The rolling elevation changes of Killearn are evident on #3 South, a downhill, 178 yard, par 3 hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

pinetrees. The fairways of the 27-hole complex meander up and down the rolling hills bordered by brick homes reminiscent of Georgia and the Carolinas.

Killearn Country Club is a Bill Amick creation and the original 18 holes were opened for play in 1967. The private membership course was the site of the PGA Tour's Tallahassee Open for 20 years from 1969 to 1989. Then the LPGA Tour came to town for their Sprint/Centel Classic from 1990 to 1993. Killearn Golf and Country Club was the original home for touring professional Bert Yancey early in his career, and in 1971 Lee Trevino won the Tallahassee Open and from there went on to win the U. S. Open, the Canadian Open and the British Open. In 1981 an additional nine holes, the North Course, was added to the original South and East nines.

In 1972 the Golf Course Superinten-

Coastal Plains Chapter

History: Serving the greater Tallahassee and Big Bend area of the state, the Coastal Plains Chapter was founded in 1988 by Robert Giehls, John Fake, Scott Price and Jeff Vietmier. Originally called the Big Bend Chapter, the name was changed to Coastal Plains in 1995.

Activities: Besides holding traditional monthly meetings, the chapter hosts the annual Coastal Plains Classic Turfgrass Research Tournament. The proceeds from this event are used to support the University of Florida's Research and Education Center in Milton, FL and research at the Coastal Plains Station in Tifton, GA.

Mission: Golf courses in the Florida panhandle are few in number widely scattered over a large area. The Coastal Plains Chapter is doing its part to help organize and educate the superintendents in the north central part of the state. Current officers are:

President & External VP: Doug Abbuhl, Seminole GC

Vice President: Mike Echols, Summerbrooke GC

Secretary/Treasurer: Jeff Heggen, Hilaman Park GC



dents Association of America held its National Golf Championship at Killearn when the conference was being held in Cincinnati, a mere 725 miles north on I-75. The headquarters for the tournament was the new Holiday Inn hotel downtown and room rates were \$12 - \$17 for single or double occupancy. Ah, the good old days! Today, Killearn Country Club is part of American Golf Corporation's Private Club Division.

In selecting Killearn to represent the chapter, Coastal Plains Chapter made Geri Buchheit the first female superintendent to have her course featured as the cover story for the *Florida Green*.



Superintendent Geri Buchheit checks one of the drift fence and trap locations on the course. The traps are part of a wildlife inventory project to identify small mammals, reptiles and invertebrates that currently inhabit the golf course. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Gerl Buchheit

Originally from: St. Louis, Missouri.

Education: 1987 - B.S. in Agronomy with specialization in Turfgrass Management from Texas A&M University.

Employment history: 1992 to present, Killearn Country Club, Tallahassee; 1990 - 1992, assistant superintendent, Colonial C.C., Ft. Worth, TX; 1987 - 1990, assistant superintendent, Stonebriar C.C., Frisco, TX; Co-op program internships at Cherry Hills C.C., Denver, CO; Emerald Bay G.C., Tyler, TX and Oakmont C.C., Denton, TX.

Professional affiliations/Honors: Member of: GCSAA, FTGA and Coastal Plains Chapter of the Florida GCSA. Service: 1996 - President Coastal Plains Chapter; 1996-98 Coastal Plains Classic Golf Tournament Committee; 1996-98 Leon County Advisory Committee for Master Wildlife Conservationist Program; 1997 - American Golf's Highest Rated Regional Superintendent determined by membership survey.

People who have influenced your life and career: Dan Hedrick, superintendent at Creve Coeur GC, the first course I worked on. He made it fun. Jim Mills, my advisor at Texas A&M. I got some great job experience because he encouraged me to go through the Co-op program. My parents got me a great education and instilled a strong work ethic. My dad also encouraged my change of my field of study from Industrial Technology to pursue a turf degree. Floyd Robinson, our mechanic for his support and guidance. Floyd has been in the business for 30 years and was a former superintendent at Killearn.

How did you get into the business: I applied for a job with the City of Creve Coeur in St. Louis through the CETA program. They hired quite a few kids to work in the Streets and Parks Dept. and one or two for the golf course. The first day I happened to be standing next to Don Hedrick, the superintendent, and he asked me if I was afraid of a handmower? I said, "No!" He asked me if I wanted to work on the golf course and I said, "Sure!" I continued to work for Don the next three summers after the program ended.

Memorable moments: I have been fortunate to work on courses hosting professional golf events eight times: 2-Colonial/SW Bell Invitationals; 1985 PGA Championship at Cherry Hills; 1991 US Women's Open at Colonial; 2-LPGA Skins Games and the Murata Senior PGA Reunion at Stonebriar; and the 1993 LPGA Sprint Classic at Killearn.

Hobbies and interests: Saltwater fishing, soccer and cooking.





No. 7 North, a 170-yard par 3 seen from behind the forward tees. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

Geri is one of only about 53 women superintendents who are members of the GCSAA.

Buccheit said she feels no special pressure to prove herself as she assumed her first superintendent's position.

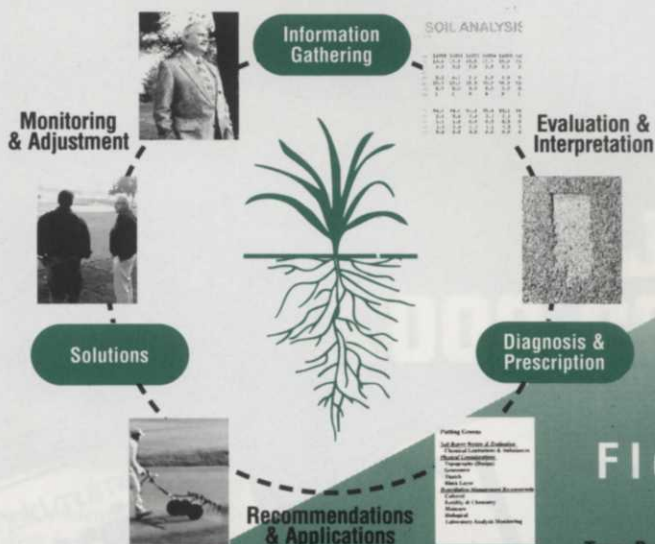
"They hired me evidently feeling I was the best qualified for the job, and I guess I've been doing something right since then," She said. "I've always had the philosophy that the results of hard work always speaks for itself."

Evidently the members agree as she earned a 1997 American Golf Highest Rated Regional Superintendent award based on a membership survey.

Buccheit has been at Killlearn's helm for the past seven years. She hosted the last LPGA event at Killlearn in 1993, but she is no stranger to preparing a golf course for professional tour events. Buccheit has two Southwest Bell-Colonial Invitationals and a U.S. Women's Open as an assistant superintendent at the Colonial C. C. in Ft. Worth, Texas.

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The pond that flanks the uphill 506 yard 5th hole on the South nine is part of the stormwater retention system for the residential area around the course. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

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Killearn Country Club Maintenance Staff including Jake, the Labrador retriever, head of the Canadian Goose Patrol. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Killearn C.C. & Inn

Location: Tallahassee

Ownership: American Golf Corporation

Playing policy: Private Membership and 39 room inn.

27 holes-North, South and East nines: Original South/East Course - Par 72 at 6432 yards. Course Rating: 71.2 Slope 120. North/East Course - Par 72 at 6360 yards. Course Rating: 70.9 Slope: 121. North/South Course - Par 72 at 6328 yards. Course Rating: 70.7 Slope: 133.

Designed by: Bill Amick.

Opened: South/East 18 holes in 1967. North nine opened in 1981.

Management: Ed Hoover, club manager; Ray Barr, Jr., head golf professional; Betty Edwards, advisory board president; Kevin Selsor, American Golf regional superintendent; and Rick Barnett, American Golf director of maintenance for East Coast private clubs.

Major Renovations/Projects: 1998-Asphalt paths replaced with concrete paths; 1998-Rebuilt greens and tees on North Course; 1995 - OSMAC irrigation control system installed. Planned future projects-Level tees and reconstruct bunkers on South and East courses.

Acreage under maintenance: 157 acres of turf.

Greens: 4 Acres. Average size: 6,000 sq. ft. Turf type: Tifdwarf. HOC 5/32". Overseeding: Poa trivialis @ 12#/1000 sq. ft. Green speed goals: 8.0.

Tees: 3 acres. Turf type: Tifway 419. HOC = 1/2". Overseeding: PhD perennial ryegrass blend = 35#/1000 sq. ft.

Fairways: 60 acres. HOC = 1/2". Overseeding: None.

Roughs: 90 acres. Turf Type: 60 acres irrigated Tifway 419 and 30 acres non-irrigated bahia/centipede. HOC = 1 1/2". Overseeding: None.

Waterways/Lakes/Ponds: 6.5 Acres. All are storm water retention ponds with most of them receiving a great deal of runoff from property surrounding the golf course.

Irrigation: Source- two wells. Equipment-South/East = 75 hp Worthington vertical turbine pump. North = 25 and 50 hp centrifugal pumps. Single-row fairway coverage on South/East nines. Primarily Toro 630, 670, 690, 730 and 750 heads.

Staff: Total of 16 including supt. includes 2 part time employees. Shane Bass, assistant superintendent; Floyd Robinson, mechanic; Dean Richards, pest control tech; Richard Stephens, irrigation tech; Pat Porter, landscape maintenance.

Maintenance equipment: Greens: 2 Jacobsen Greens Kings. Tees: 2 Jacobsen Greens Kings. Fairways: 2 Jacobsen 3810, 5-gang mowers. Roughs: 1 Jacobsen 3810, 5-gang mower and a Woods 9204 bat-wing mower.

Cultural programs: Greens - aerify 2x/year w/Greencare Coremaster 12. Tees - aerify 1x/year with Coremaster 12 and 1x/year with Ryan Renovaire. Fairways - Core aerify 2x/year with Ryan Renovaire.

Wildlife inventory: Killearn currently involved in a wildlife study with Leon County Extension Office in a Master Wildlife Conservation Program to determine how to enhance wildlife populations on the golf course.

As an assistant at Stonebriar C. C. in Frisco, Texas, she helped prepare for two LPGA Skins Games in 1990 and '91 and one Murata PGA Seniors Reunion event. Don January was the director of golf while Geri was at Stonebriar. And then there was the 1985 PGA Championship at Cherry Hills in Denver when she was a student doing an internship.

Buchheit said, "One of my best tournament experiences was when Nancy Lopez went out of her way to introduce herself to me during an event. She didn't have to do that and I really didn't expect it. It showed what kind of person she is and what class she has.

"And probably the worst tournament experience I ever had was at the Colonial Invitational one year. Everything was looking real good on the bentgrass greens, then we got 4 inches of rain and the temperatures soared just before the event. The heat and the humidity and the tournament conditions took their toll. We were spreading ice on the greens at night



Mature pines and oaks frame the No. 2 South green giving the course a distinctive parkland appearance. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



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Killlearn's Pro Shop and practice greens. The 39-room inn is to the right and behind the flagpoles. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

Overseeding at Killlearn

PREPARATION

Apply split applications of Ronstar XL. The first in August and the second 60 days later using drop spreaders to outline the putting surfaces, collars and tees. Then making two more passes outside of that with rotary spreaders to control *Poa annua* and walked-off seeds. When the bermuda is at least 80% dormant, usually around December, we spray the fairways with Princep for *Poa annua* and volunteer ryegrass control. In 1998 we used Barricade with good results.

SEEDING

We only overseed tees and greens. We apply all of our seed at one time. With 27 holes to work with, we close nine holes at a time usually in late October and apply 12 lbs of Sabre *Poa trivialis* to the greens using rotary spreaders going in several directions until the correct rate is achieved. Using the same method we apply 35 lbs of PhD perennial ryegrass to the tees.

GROW-IN

After the seed is down. We apply a light top dressing and do not mow for almost 10 days to allow the seed to germinate undisturbed. Since the turf growth is slowing down, the playability is not affected as much as you would think. It is a trade-off that the members make to assure a good catch of seed. We will syringe off the dew in the mornings during this 10-day waiting period. We apply a low rate of granular starter fertilizer after germination and then switch to soluble fertilizers for most of the season.

TRANSITION

We don't do anything heroic or really aggressive to aid transition. Our main procedure is to begin dragging the greens with a heavy brush made by our mechanic to help groom out the grass slowly as the temperatures warm up. By late March or the first week in April we are usually ready to aerify and verticut.

trying to lower the soil temperatures. The conditions were beyond control."

But now the Texas A&M graduate is in control of the 150-acre Killlearn layout that offers plenty of challenges to any turf manager. The 32-year-old course has a single-row irrigation system and lots of mature trees in the roughs.

"The unirrigated and shady areas in the roughs require special attention," she notes. "We had to hand-water a lot of new sod along the new cart paths we put in last summer because they weren't covered in many cases by the existing heads.

"On a regular basis we also add topsoil to many of the thin areas under the trees and plant shade tolerant grasses. Then we rope off the area and monitor the cart traffic until the grass gets established."

Buccheit is tackling another project designed to enhance the wildlife on the golf course.

"Over the years with all the homes along the golf course, the understory vegetation has been cleared out. I began looking at the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program to learn ways we could improve the habitat. About this time I happened to meet Will Sheftall with the Leon County Extension Office. He was looking for a way to develop a Master Wildlife Conservation program and so we joined forces.

"We submitted a letter describing our goals and the community volunteer involvement to secure a grant for the project. We have local environmentalists and Audubon members working with us on the project. We are focusing on four primary areas: aquatics; bird populations and small mammal, reptile and insect populations; and exotic plants. All the areas under consideration are being mapped using GPS and can be overlain onto topographic and soils maps.

"We are conducting monthly bird counts and we have set up drift fences with traps in several locations to catch, count and release the critters so we can monitor their numbers and movements. In out-of-play areas we will be planting beneficial native species for food and cover and creating brush piles to provide habitat for small animals."



The first rays of sunrise begin to highlight the green on #1 South. Note the unusual purple martin house right of the hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

"The aquatics will be a major part of the effort. All of the water hazards on the golf course are designed to capture runoff from the neighborhoods and act as stormwater retention ponds. Consequently, the water quality is of concern. We are testing the water and the sediments and taking an inventory of fish and invertebrate populations. We plan to aquascape the ponds to help improve the filtration of the runoff and to restock with fish and minnows as needed."

Buccheit said a few of the environmentalists approached the project with some skepticism, but that it has been a good experience as everyone learned about each other's commitment and concerns.

This past year was not easy for Buccheit and her crew as they grew in the newly renovated greens on the North Course and had to deal with the cart path project as well.

"It took some getting used too, man-

aging the new greens on one nine compared to the older greens on the other 18. The older greens are so much more resilient with their thatch layer. The new greens didn't have much recuperative power when they had to deal with the El Nino weather effects last year. In hindsight, I would have raised the height of cut more to relieve some of that stress on the new greens."

Projects always put an extra strain on routine operations, so Buccheit was extremely proud of her crew as they dug in and got the job done.

"I think the most important thing a superintendent can do is to talk with the employees and let them know on a personal basis you appreciate them and their work. There is a suggestion from the crew to try a "zone" or "team" concept in work assignments. We're discussing trying it out. It can be a good pride and morale builder for those who want to take ownership and responsibility for

their work product."

Buccheit says she also makes sure to talk to someone in the pro shop at least once a day to make sure every one is on the same page with course conditions and the status of play for the day.

"Communications is the key! We have so much to do, so many bases to cover, we can get stretched pretty thin sometimes. We need to know what's going on, and they need to know what we're doing for the best product for our members."

Buccheit salutes the members for their recognition of the efforts being made to improve course conditions.

"The members have just been great when it comes to our projects and programs. They know we are working hard to provide them with a better golf course and they let us get on with our business. New members also drive changes, and as the competition for the golf market in Tallahassee changes, so will we!"