



 *Par-3, 208-yard  
14th Hole  
The Club at Eaglebrooke  
Photo by Daniel Zelazek*





The Club at Eaglebrooke

# Sometimes You CAN Go Home Again

*By Joel Jackson, CGCS*

The Club at Eaglebrooke lies about six to eight miles due south of the heart of Lakeland and borders the newly dedicated 550-acre Lakeland Highlands Scrub Jay Preserve. The land at one time was part of the vast phosphate mining enterprises that encompassed much of Polk County. Since 1996, Eaglebrooke, a Ron

Garl-designed golf course, has been the semi-private centerpiece for a growing and thriving residential community.

Five years ago, Alan Puckett returned to his hometown to take over the maintenance reins at this challenging 7005-yard golf course and he continues to live out his lifelong dream of

just being a good golf course superintendent. As Puckett noted, "I've done the association thing; now it's time to give back to the community."

Puckett ascribes to the philosophy of "work hard – play hard," something he learned at the elbow of University of Florida's golf turf legend, Dr. G. C. Horn back in Puckett's days at the



Tom Burrows, Consulting  
Agronomist/Turfgrass Specialist  
Independent Consulting using  
"Brookside Laboratory"

#### Greens Reconstruction

- ◆ Soil Physical Analysis
- ◆ USGA Approved Testing
- ◆ Analytical Service
- ◆ Recommendations
- ◆ Specifications for Contractor Bidding

#### Soil Testing

- ◆ Greens, Tees, Fairways
- ◆ Analytical Report and Soil Fertility Recommendations

#### Water Testing

- ◆ Report & Recommendations

*In the business 40 years*

Jensen Beach, Florida  
772-692-1221 cell: 772-215-1819

**Laserturf.**  
Setting the Standard

Laser Controlled Leveling  
and Toppressing For:

**Golf Tees**  
**Sports Fields**  
**Tennis & Croquet**  
**Courts**

• **Dale Witting**  
Main Office

• **Ron Butler**  
Central Florida

• **Tom Mackanos**  
Northeast Coast

**772-225-3771**

1535 NE Darlich Ave.  
Jensen Beach, FL 34957

## Course Facts



*Eaglebrooke Golf Course Maintenance Staff. Eaglebrooke photo.*

### The Club at Eaglebrooke

**Location:** Lakeland

**Ownership:** Paul McDonald, owner and Dale Jacobs, managing partner

**Playing policy:** Semi-private

**Number of holes:** 18; 7005 yards; par 72; six teeing areas per hole.

**Rating/Slope:** 74.0/136 from the tips.

**Designed by:** Ron Garl

**Opened:** 1996

**Management:** Club Manager Cyndi Clark; Head Golf Professional John Greiner; Chef David Dunn; Superintendent Alan Puckett.

**Renovation project:** Redesign of the par-5, 17th hole into a double dogleg with a more user-friendly landing area. Construction by Highland Golf.

**Total acreage under maintenance:** 130 acres

**Greens:** TifDwarf; avg. size 5,800 sq. ft.; total 3.5 acres; HOC.110 in.; overseeding: Poa trivialis and Red Top fescue blend; green speed goals: 10.0 - 11.0.

**Tees:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 3.0 acres; HOC: .400 in.; overseeding: Derby Supreme ryegrass.

**Fairways:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 45 acres; no overseeding.

**Roughs:** GN1 bermudagrass; total 68 acres; no overseeding

**Bunkers:** 52. 37M sand; machine-raked with Toro Sand Pro.

**Native areas:** Waste areas on holes 5, 7, 17; accent plantings of cordgrass; machine-raked twice weekly; cordgrass maintained by manual cultivation and over-the-top spraying as needed.

**Waterways/Lakes:** 7 interconnected lakes; edges and banks maintained by outside contractor.

**Irrigation:** Source – surface water supplemented by reuse storage; Controls – Toro Osmac; fertigation system; head spacing 76 ft.; no watering restrictions currently in effect.

**Water management/conservation:** Daily check of pump house, system check for leaks; Adjust ET rate daily based on weather and turf conditions.

**Staff:** 15 full time including superintendent and 1 part-time student working his way through school; scheduled 40 hrs straight time with 7 hrs overtime biweekly.

**Leadership:** Assistant Superintendent Rick Fountaine, Equipment Technician Brian Sargent, Spray Tech and weekend foreman Bob Cody.

**Communications:** Daily crew operations meeting; weekly club department head staff meeting; biweekly crew/safety meetings; biannual meeting with the members.

**Cultural Programs:** Aerification – greens, tees and fairways 3x per year; Aerification Plus does greens, we do tees and fairways in house. Fairway nutrition – four bulk applications of 15-5-15 per year; spring and fall applications have preemergent herbicides sparged on the fertilizer; supplement with fertigation (24-0-0, 8-0-8 or 6-0-12) monthly depending on time of year. Greens nutrition – alternate granular 13-4-13 with a minors foliar spray biweekly.

**Pest Control:** Apply Chipco Choice annually for mole cricket control; All other insect, weed and disease control is done only as needed except for the two pre-emergent herbicide applications in the spring and fall.

**Management Challenges:** This site is reclaimed phosphate mining land. The heavy soils can get sloppy wet, so we tend to keep the course on the dry side.

**Environment:** We have done a wildlife inventory that includes 114 species of critters and 68 species of birds.

**Special events:** Annual Member-Guest and Club Championship tournaments. We hosted an LPGA Futures Tour event for five years and in October of this year we will host a PGA Championship Tour qualifying event.

Grenelefe Resort in Haines City. Puckett said, "A lot of the industry people owe a lot to Dr. Horn when he was a turf consultant in the booming days of golf course development in Florida. He was a good buffer between the superintendent and the members and explained the agronomy needed to groom golf courses."

*(Editors note: A personal tip of the hat to Dr. Horn: while we didn't have members at Disney World, riding along with him on his consultant visits at the Lake Buena Vista course was my crash course in turf management after majoring in geology. I was better able to understand and communicate to my corporate chain of command because of him.)*

Puckett's 24-year career since graduating from Lake City Community College in 1981 has been spent largely in Polk County. Right out of Lake City he spent two years at the World of Palm Aire in Pompano as a spray-tech/assistant before moving to Walden Lake in Hillsborough County for two years as an assistant. After a five-year stint at Grenelefe as an assistant superintendent, he spent 10 years at the

golf course maintenance helm of the Lake Region Yacht & Country Club in Winter Haven. Puckett had been working himself closer to home with every move. Now he is home.

The lessons learned from Dr. Horn went beyond sound, basic turf management. They included things like, "Work hard every day. That's what they pay you for, but when day is done go home and have a life. Come back tomorrow and work hard again."

Puckett says he feels too many of his peers don't get it and they are burning out too quickly these days.

But people get into the superintendent profession in many ways, and for Puckett it was a matter of connecting with his father Ron who held two jobs each day: English professor in the mornings and club tennis pro in the afternoons. Puckett took a job in the club's cart barn just so he could spend more time around his dad. In the process he fell in love with the golf industry. By the time kids in high school were wondering what the future held in store for them, Puckett knew he wanted to be a golf course superintendent and he has been living his dream ever since.

Eaglebrooke gave Puckett the chance

to come home and he takes that opportunity seriously as he has spent time learning to work the land placed under his command. There is always a learning curve when a new superintendent takes over and one of the biggest for Puckett was getting used to having homes bordering the golf course.

"It was a big adjustment for me to have homes on the course. Scheduling work took on a new meaning when I had to consider noise levels and dusty operations like bulk fertilizer applications and aerification-core clean-up on fairways."

Getting to know the course and how it responds to nutrient and cultural practices is also an important piece of the management puzzle and one that members often don't consider when making superintendent changes. In Puckett's case, irrigation management is critical for Eaglebrooke's playability and customer satisfaction. He explained, "Much of this property is reclaimed phosphate mining land and the soil is fine textured and readily holds moisture, so I have learned to keep it on the dry side to allow for rainfall or a necessary heavy irrigation. It can get a little sloppy out there if it gets too wet."

# South Florida Grassing, Inc

Over 35 Years in the Grassing Industry

**TifSport**

**SeaIsle**  
Certified Seashore Paspalum

**Sod, Sprigs and Rolls available**

- We provide reworking and planting services for fairways, tees and greens
- Our grass is grown in Hobe Sound on gassed, sand-based soil
- Hydro-mulching, grassing and mulching also available

**Tifway 419**

**TifEagle**

**Tifdwarf**



**Certified Producer**

Southern Seed  
Certification Association

**(772) 546-4191**

**www.southfloridagrassing.com**

**800-483-4279**



*The par-3, third hole borders one of seven interconnected lakes on the course. Note the guy ropes on the trees behind the green - necessary reminders of the 2004 hurricane season. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

To the club's credit they replaced the old equipment when Puckett came on board so

he had some good tools to work with to give them the best course that he could. It wasn't long

before Puckett discovered some of the problems revolved around pH issues, which he controls

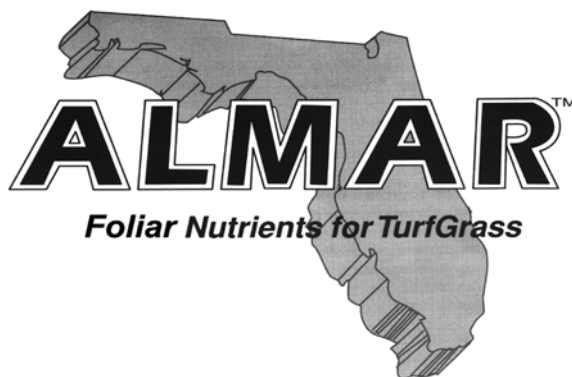
## Producers & Installers of Fumigated Georgia Certified Quality Turfgrasses for Golf Courses and Athletic Fields



- Tifway •Tifdwarf •TifSport •TifEagle
- Meyer Zoysia •Centipede Sod/Seed
- SeaDwarf •SeaIsle I •SeaIsle 2000
- SeaIsle Supreme

**Pike Creek Turf, Inc.**  
427 Pike Creek Turf Circle, Adel, GA 31620  
**1-800-232-7453**

[www.pikecreekturf.com](http://www.pikecreekturf.com)



**Foliar Leader Since 1975**

**(800) 340-3888**

P. O. BOX 291370, TAMPA, FL 33687  
FAX (813) 988-0329





*The 526-yard fifth hole plays along one of the three large waste areas on the course. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

with regular soil sampling and custom fertilizer applications. Another big issue is the irrigation

water source. The primary source is surface water pumped from the seven interconnected

lakes on the property. This source is supplemented by reclaimed water from the county and the



# Your Sand Man

- Trap Sand      • Top Dressing Sand
- Greens Mix    • Green Divot Sand

**All Sands meet U.S.G.A. Specs**

**E. R. JAHNA INDUSTRIES, Inc.**

Lake Wales, FL 33859-0840 • (863) 676-9431

## Superintendent Facts



Alan Puckett. Photo by Joel Jackson

### Alan Puckett

**Originally from:** Lakeland

**Family:** Parents Edith and Ron Puckett; two sisters and three nephews

**Education:** A.S. in Golf Course Operations from Lake City Community College, 1981.

**Employment history:** 2000-present The Club at Eaglebrooke, superintendent; 1990-2000 Lake Region Yacht & Country Club, superintendent; 1985-90 Grenlefe G.C., assistant superintendent; 1983-85 Walden Lakes G.C., assistant superintendent; 1981-83 World of Palm Aire,

**Professional affiliations and awards:** Member of GCSAA, FGCSA, FTGA and Ridge GCSA. Served as president of the Ridge GCSA and the Florida Turfgrass Association and on the FGCSA board of directors, Polk County Water Policy Board.

**How did you get into the business?** My dad worked as a tennis pro at a golf club and I got a job in the cart barn so I could see him more often. Fell in love with the golf business.

**Mentors:** Dr. G. C. Horn – learned a lot of turf

management riding around Grenlefe with him. Mike McGloughlin, David Barnes, Mark Jarrell, and Joel Jackson.

**Goals and accomplishments:** I've become a fairly successful golf course superintendent and that's all I wanted to be. My best accomplishments are finding out that home is where the heart and satisfaction are. I take care of Little League fields, the church soccer field, help with the Lakeland First Tee project, work with the Lakeland Boys and Girls Club, serve on the Ridge GCSA board and sit on the Community Development District for Eaglebrooke.

**Work philosophy:** A professional is supposed to be dedicated, work hard and be loyal. Give it your all each day, but when you go home, leave it all at work, and have a life of your own. Your work is not who you are. Work is what you do to pay the bills.

**Memorable moments:** Being president of the FTGA and the Ridge Chapter. Being part of the Lakeland First Tee project.

**Hobbies/Interests:** Fishing, golf, stock car racing, community involvement.

course currently has one well as an emergency source if the reclaimed water can't meet the needs of the course. In the beginning the county loved having Eaglebrooke as a logical distribution and disposal site on the south side of town. With the growth of the use of effluent as a residential landscape irrigation source, it has become a finite resource and a couple of courses including Eaglebrooke have been hit with user fees that others don't have to pay.

This is not the first time that inconsistency has crept into the use of effluent water in the golf industry. Around the state, utilities make unilateral and often uninformed decisions about water quantities and rates for golf courses and don't seem to balance the fact that while courses need the water, the counties also need the disposal site, which planners and policymakers should value more highly.

But Puckett is not complaining, in fact he and the owners work closely with the county water regulators and the homes in the development have electronic metering to monitor residential irrigation use. The county has even recommended that Eaglebrooke install a second back-up well to make sure an emergency source is available if needed.

But the bottom line is producing a pleasing golf course, and Puckett takes the old school approach of watching the plant and giving it what it needs. The greens are TifDwarf and his tees, fairways and roughs are GN-1 bermudagrass.

"You hear lots of comments about GN-1, good and bad," Puckett said, "but in my travels I have found the performance tends to be site specific. It performs very well here on our finer soils, but I know on some of the sandier courses, it can seem to struggle. I guess the extra moisture and nutrient retention has an effect."

Puckett fertilizes the GN-1 four times a year, generally with a 15-5-15 blend based on soil samples, but the spring and fall applications also contain a pre-emergent herbicide to control weeds. The fairways are also slit injected annually with Chipco Choice to control mole crickets. Any other pest-control treatments are applied only when and where they are needed. Gone are the days of wall-to-wall spraying.

On the day that I visited Eaglebrooke, the course was on the last day of a three-day closing to aerify and topdress greens. Puckett uses an outside contractor, Aerification Plus to punch the greens three times a year.

"Of course we could buy and maintain the equipment," he said, "but there is so much to do when we're closed it benefits us to have Russ (Varney) and his gang come in and punch holes and pick up the cores. It is one of those curious things that members don't always get. They think we are just punching holes and spreading sand when we are closed, so lately I have been posting a list of the 24 jobs we do when we are closed, so they know there's more to it than aerifying.

"Of course people don't like us to disturb the greens, but our golf pro and our better golfers understand that the sand will help the ball roll smoother and that is the message we put out."

Besides the course closing, Puckett is working with Ron Garl and Highland Golf in the redesign of the 17th hole, a double dogleg, par 5 that needed some tweaking to make it a better-driving hole. They're also adding a large runoff retention area. The reconstructed tee complex and the widened fairway portion had been sprigged and sodded in key areas to prevent erosion with the rainy season just weeks away.

"The old layout was a narrow chute off the tee," Puckett said, "and the fairway



*A large stormwater retention area is part of the redesign of the 17th hole. The tee tops and fairways have been sprigged and erosion-prone areas are being sodded. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

bunker was so close you often had to lay up, not always a good strategy move on a par 5. As it

was, the fairway bunker was penalizing the average golfers. Now the long hitters have more of a

risk-vs.-reward shot and it is a better golf hole.”

As we headed back to Puckett’s office

## This Summer Keep Your Turf at its Finest with:



**Quality Foliar Nutrients**

**28% Controlled Released Nitrogen**

**Water Treatment Ammendment**

**LiquidAg  
Systems**

**If excess rain is leaching out your granular fertilizer, save money spoon-feeding your turf with liquid instead!**

Liquid Ag has the equipment, service and expertise to keep your professional sports turf looking its best all year round.

**Liquid Ag Systems**  
Corporate Office:  
800 Trafalgar Court, Suite 320  
Maitland, FL 32751  
407-682-6100 • 407-682-6693 fax

**Call today and ask about our innovative calcium products to meet your needs!**  
**(800) 775-5593!**





A scenic view from the 15th green with No. 12 in the background. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

## Fun Facts



The top dog, Roscoe, and his sidekick Alan.  
Photo by Joel Jackson

Also known as Slim Shady, Alan Puckett, has a carefree sense of humor and a big heart

**Car:** Ford F-150

**The last good movie I saw:** The Legend of Bagger Vance

**I stay home to watch:** NASCAR, golf, old movies, the Discovery Channel

**The book I've been reading:** What's a book?

**Favorite meal:** Shark and shrimp on the grill with a little Crown

**Favorite performers:** Jimmy Buffet and Tom Hanks

**Prized possessions:** Family and friends

**Personal Heroes:** Mom and Dad

**Nobody knows that I:** Really care about what I do

**I'm better than anyone else when it comes to:** Coming up with a plan

**I'd give anything to meet:** Angelina Jolie

**My fantasy is:** To win the lottery and then really get into trouble

**The one thing I can't stand:** Two-faced people

**If I could change one thing about myself:** I don't know, I'm pretty cool now!

**My most irrational act:** Being politically correct

**My most humbling experience:** Working with kids who make the best of what they have

**The words that best describe me:** I have a need to help others

I noted the numerous osprey nests on the nearby utility poles which prompted him to mention that Eaglebrooke had documented 182 species of animals on the property, 68 of which are birds.

One animal has a special place at Eaglebrooke: "shop dog" Roscoe P. Coltrane, a black Labrador retriever who was abandoned near the course when he was less than a year old. Roscoe has since become a fixture at the shop, in Puckett's cart when he rides the course, or on the clubhouse veranda where he often spoiled by the staff with delicacies from the kitchen.

Roscoe is the shared responsibility of the whole crew and he goes home each night with a different person. I can vouch that in return Roscoe protects the home turf: he gave me rather curt greeting at the shop until Puckett vouched for me. Roscoe then graciously gave up his seat in Puckett's cart and rode in the back while we toured the course.

Perhaps it was that sense of comfort that pervaded my visit to Eaglebrooke, where Puckett has come back to his boyhood community to work and live. No less intense than ever as a professional in his work day approach to his responsibilities, but excited and energized to be part of the community with his work with the Boys and Girls Club, and a seat on the



*A different view of the par-4, 431-yard 15th hole indicating why it is the number-two handicap hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

Community Development District Board or  
working with the Ridge GCSA on the Lakeland

First Tee project which has been a great project  
pulling all segments of the community together

in a common cause.

Puckett concluded the visit with these

## Computer-Exact Custom Mixes. Every Order. Every Time.

- All Loads Scaled
- Soil Analysis Available



- Next Day Service
- Volume Orders

Visit our website at [www.golfAg.com](http://www.golfAg.com)!

### Traps Installed to Spec.



**G**olf Agronomics meets all your top dressing needs with our ability to customize your mix with a variety of soil amendments including:

- Dolomite
- Hi-Cal
- Charcoal
- Wetting Agents
- Humic Acid
- Minor Elements
- Rock Phosphate
- Gypsum
- Customer Products

**GOLF AGRONOMICS  
SUPPLY & HANDLING**

Serving all of Florida

(800) 626-1359  
(941) 955-4690 Fax





*The second half of the double-dogleg, 514-yard, 17th hole. The first half of the hole is being redesigned to enhance the playability and strategy of the tee shot. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

remarks, "They say you can't go home again. Well maybe you can go home with a different view. I reached a lot of my career goals at an early age, but

working with some of these kids is amazing. We take for granted what we have sometimes and it is awesome watching these kids make do with what

they have. I am the richest person in the world because of my family and friends."

Welcome home Alan.

# Water

## Where Does it Really Go?

Your irrigation system may deliver water to the surface exactly as you intend – but did you know that 30-70% of applied water never reaches the rootzone?

**Dispatch**® minimizes the amount of water lost to runoff and evaporation. This can help you save up to 50% in water and energy while still maintaining quality turf course wide.



Mark Cleveland, Aquatrols Territory Manager  
205-807-0837 • mark.cleveland@aquatrols.com



**For distributor information, contact:**

**Howard Fertilizer:** 800-899-3141  
[www.howardfertilizer.com](http://www.howardfertilizer.com)

**Independent Turf Partners:** 772-260-0282