



*Par-3, 173-yard 17th Hole St. James Bay Club*  
*Photo by Daniel Zelazek*





*In a part of Florida  
where time moves just a  
little slower and  
development even  
slower, St. James Bay  
has preserved small  
pieces of man's history  
on the land.*

St. James Bay Golf Club

# Discovering the Forgotten Coast

*By Joel Jackson*

I'm a native Floridian and thought I had heard all the names for the various sections of the state's lengthy coastline. From Jacksonville down the eastern seaboard there's the First Coast, Space Coast, Treasure Coast and the Gold Coast in the

Dade-Broward area. Swinging up the western side of the state there's the, Platinum Coast, Suncoast, Nature Coast and Emerald Coast in the Destin-Pensacola area. Did I miss anyone? Evidently I did.

It wasn't until this trip to St. James Bay at Carrabelle in the eastern panhandle that I heard Coast Radio 100.5 FM proclaim the station's listen-

ing area as, "the Forgotten Coast from Apalachicola to Tallahassee" and realized I had discovered yet another unique coastal area of Florida. After returning home I found out more about the history of this area on the Internet at [www.forgotten-florida.com](http://www.forgotten-florida.com). It is a story of forestry, fisheries and Camp Gordon Johnson, a World War II training camp for amphib-



## Course Facts



*St. James Bay Golf Course Maintenance Staff.*

### St. James Bay Golf Club

**Location:** Carrabelle

**Ownership:** Carrabelle Properties Ltd.

**Playing policy:** Public

**Basic Stats:** 18 holes. 6,730 yards. Par 72. Course Rating/Slope, Black Tees 72.9/142, Green Tees 70.3/123

**Design/Construction:** Robert Walker, architect. Highland Golf, construction. Opened September 2003.

**Management:** Owner Eddie Clark; Club Manager Bob Klein; Head Golf Professional Steve Hatch; Golf Course Superintendent Shane Bass.

**Continuing projects:** Native area management

**Total acreage under maintenance:** 80

**Greens:** TifEagle; avg. 6,200 sq. ft.; total, 3 acres; HOC .100 - .125 in.; not overseeded. green speed goals, 9.0 - 11.0.

**Tees:** Tifway 419 bermudagrass; 3.0 acres; HOC .500 in.; not overseeded.

**Fairways:** Tifway 419 bermudagrass; 35 acres; HOC .500 in.; not overseeded.

**Roughs:** Tifway 419 bermudagrass; 38 acres; HOC 1.50 in.; not overseeded

**Bunkers:** 60; 4SEA; sand machine-raked with Toro Sand Pro twice per week, hand-raked on the other days.

**Native areas:** 113 acres of preserved wetlands. 26 acres of preserved uplands. 11 acres of upland preserve that comprises a 25-foot buffer strip across the backs of all residential lots on the golf course that must be left natural.

**Waterways/Lakes:** 15 interconnected lakes main-

tained by Biological Research Associates. They also prune and trim back wetland vegetation twice per year.

**Irrigation:** Source: surface water, but will take some effluent from city of Carrabelle in the near future after they upgrade their treatment plant. Pumping System: Flotronex VFD. Control System: Toro Site Pro/OSMAC, 730 heads; Nutrifed fertigation system.

**Water management/conservation:** The irrigation system was specifically designed to prevent watering of non-turf areas. A lot of adjustable heads were installed to prevent throwing water into lakes, wetlands and upland preserves.

**Maintenance Staff:** 13 including superintendent. Scheduled 40 hours straight time with occasional overtime only as needed.

**Leadership:** Assistant Superintendent Larry Johnson, Equipment Technician Floyd Robinson.

**Communications:** Quarterly meetings of the whole club. Daily crew meetings.

**Cultural Programs:** Aerification – Turf & Aquatic Management does greens aerification three times a year. Fertilization – Southern States Fertilizers.

**Management Challenges:** Irrigation, nutrient and drainage management due to heavy soils on a few holes.

**Environment:** Fully certified Silver Audubon International Signature Sanctuary. We closely manage our nutrients and chemicals since we are so close to Apalachicola Bay where they harvest most of the oysters consumed in the U.S. Many people in this area are down on golf courses. It is our goal and mission to show them that it can be done without harming the environment. The good news is we have made some converts already.

ous operations that paved the way for the Normandy invasion and the island-hopping Pacific campaign.

With the coming of St. James Bay and the first 18-hole golf course it brought to Franklin County, the “Forgotten Coast” has been discovered again and likely won’t be forgotten any more. Of course it’s really unfair to say this area was forgotten; it’s been more like a well-kept secret by people who like to get away from it all. Long on natural resources and short on traffic jams, Carrabelle (population 1,303) and its neighboring small towns enjoy

a peaceful, slow-paced lifestyle. The amenities here are solitude and spectacular seafood from the famous Apalachicola Bay oysters to sports fishing.

Eddie Clark, owner and developer of St. James Bay, has taken care to respect the history and natural resources of the area. The golf villas by the clubhouse were built on the four pads used to anchor a 600-foot radio tower used by the World War II army training camp. Wildlife and native habitat was preserved by developing the project and golf course as an Audubon International Silver Signature

Sanctuary. It was Clark’s willing embrace of the blueprint for sound development and operational practices mandated by Audubon International’s program that helped overcome objections to the project by some local officials and residents. They found out that a golf course done right can be an asset to the community.

St. James Bay just became certified thanks in large part to the efforts of the golf course superintendent Shane Bass, CGCS. “Mr. Clark, by nature is a tree lover,” Bass said, “I think we had

almost 25 miles of orange-poly fencing installed to identify and protect stands of trees as we began clearing. We had lots of conversations with Robert Walker, the golf course architect, over routing and specimen tree placement and protection. I've been to our corporate headquarters in Dallas several times and some of the largest pecan trees I've ever seen are incorporated into the landscape of the office complex. The man loves his trees."

Bass continued, "We are virtually surrounded by the Apalachicola State Forest and there are three continuous wildlife corridors running across the property that provide safe passage for the wildlife."

Consequently the course can be described as tight and challenging for those who tee

important role as representing the golf industry for state legislators to see up close. Grateful thanks go to Jeff Heggen, external vice-president for his tireless efforts over many years to represent the chapter and to relay FGCSA communications to his members.

Around 16 of the 23 members made 45-mile the journey to see and play the new St. James Bay course. The whole operation had that "new car aura about it and there wasn't much for the Coastal Plains superintendents playing the course to comment on other than how clean the course looked. The two-year old TifEagle greens were flawless.

Bass came on board the St. James Bay project three months before clearing began. This is an ideal situation for a superintendent, and pays div-

and so it is with St. James Bay as Bass found himself not only building and growing in a golf course but also working with contractors building roads and developing lots. As if his plate weren't full enough, Bass managed to attain his certified golf course superintendent status with the GCSAA at the same time.

There's no question that the Panhandle of Florida marches to the beat of a different drummer. While superintendents from Jacksonville south are hastily preparing for the winter migration of snowbird golfers, Carrabelle and the "Forgotten Coast" mark December, January and February as their slow season. That fact, says Bass, is why they have chosen not to oversee the TifEagle greens — or the rest of the course, for that matter. Bass says,

## Superintendent Facts



*The Bass family: Shane, Karla and Bryce.*

### Shane Bass, CGCS

**Originally from:** Titusville

**Family:** Wife Karla and son Bryce

**Education:** B.S. in ornamental horticulture from

Florida A&M.; B.S. in psychology from Florida State University

**Employment history:** 2001-Present St. James Bay, superintendent; 1999-2001 Lely Resort-Flamingo Island Club, superintendent; 1996-99 Killearn C.C., assistant superintendent; 1995-96 Royal Oak C.C., assistant superintendent; 1991-95 Killearn C.C., crew member.

**Professional affiliations and awards:** Member of GCSAA and FGCSA. vice president of the Coastal Plains GCSA chapter.

**How did you get into the business?** In high school I worked the golf carts at Royal Oaks C.C. in Titusville. I was influenced by Steve Hill the GM/golf pro and went to FSU with the intention of becoming a general manager. During my studies at FSU, they needed some help on the Killearn CC course to prepare for an LPGA event. It was there I met Geri Bucheit and Floyd Robinson and changed my mind. Geri hired me and let me work on the

course around my class schedule as I went back and got my BS in ornamental horticulture.

**Mentors:** Geri and Floyd. Floyd was old school and had been in the business for 30-plus years and Geri was a Texas A&M grad with lots of PGA and LPGA tournament experience. I had a great learning atmosphere of the old and new ways of doing things. I also owe a big debt of thanks to my parents who taught me never to quit on anything no matter how difficult it might be.

**Goals and accomplishments:** Becoming a CGCS, achieving Audubon International certification as a Silver Signature Sanctuary and opening a new course all in the same year.

**Work philosophy:** Live every day as if it is your last. Smile and put your family first.

**Memorable moments:** Telling my wife after she had our son Bryce, "You can name him anything you want.

**Hobbies/Interests:** Fishing, surfing, golf

it up from the tips, but I played it from the white tees as a 22-handicapper and the only real trouble I had was from poor shot-making. Because the course is built in a coastal marsh environment surrounded by pine forests there are numerous carries over preserved wetlands, but the GPS Shot Link monitor on the cart gives yardages to help club selection, shot strategy and pace of play.

Bass was hosting the November chapter meeting of the Coastal Plains GCSA during my visit, which gave me a chance to meet some of the members of the state's smallest chapter that exists primarily in the metropolitan Tallahassee area. Although small in number, the chapter holds an

identends down the road for owners who have the foresight to recognize how valuable a superintendent can be to the overall picture. Bass said, "I was included from the beginning and worked with Mr. Clark, the engineers and the architect Robert Walker. I was able to voice maintenance concerns and help the owner realize his vision of a golf course with reasonable maintenance costs. The original design concept had lots of contoured fingers in the bunkers requiring lots of Flymow work. We were able to negotiate down the number of bunkers with fingers to 13 out of a total of 60 bunkers."

As just evidenced, communication is always a key element in any successful operation

"Sure we can have some cold days, but by being so close to the Gulf, our weather is definitely warmer than, say, Tallahassee to the northeast. We have some shaded greens we have to watch closely because of the surrounding trees, so we don't need the extra competition with the overseeding; plus Mr. Clark is an avid golfer and he really despises transition."

One of Bass's early challenges was in finding and training a golf maintenance staff in an area not previously known for the sport. Besides Bass the only people on the crew with experience were his assistant Larry Johnson and equipment manager (and former superintendent) Floyd





*Golden wildflowers flourish in a preserved native area on the par-4, 16th hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*



*These golf villas were built on the foundation slabs of Camp Gordon Johnson's 600-foot radio tower used during World War II. Photo by Joel Jackson.*



Robinson. The area's primary labor pool consisted of former fishermen and oystermen but, once they understood the mission and learned their roles and responsibilities, Bass says they have become a topnotch, dependable team.

Bass is part of the new generation of young superintendents. They grew up with environmental issues as part of their education and routine content in the news. Bass says he does not find managing golf turf within the Audubon program any more time-consuming than any other maintenance program he was involved in while learning the business.

Bass praises his mentors Steve Hill, Geri Buchheit, CGCS, and Floyd Robinson. From them he received encouragement and training in the business from the pro shop operations under Hill at Royal Oak CC in Titusville to golf course maintenance from Robinson and Buchheit at Killearn CC in Tallahassee. Bass said, "Floyd and Geri were great teachers. They came from two different generations of superintendents so I got a lot of practical turf management history and changes from them. Geri's active involvement in environmental stewardship, the Audubon program and working with the Leon County Extension Office with their Master Wildlife Conservation Program made a lasting impression on me."

Bass said, "The truth is we use fewer chemicals now and the course is in great shape. The only times I use a boom is to foliar feed the greens and treat greens for armyworms, which are our biggest nuisance up here. I do apply some pre-emergent herbicides for *Poa annua* control in the cool season. We spot-treat all weeds with 2.5-gallon sprayers. I have trained three guys to identify and treat weeds. It takes them maybe three days total to do the whole course. We spend less on chemicals and labor doing it this way, and we certainly don't

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*The 9th hole. Play it safe or challenge the lake on the long par 4. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*



*On the 5th tee, native muhlygrass's lavender inflorescence on display. No. 8 green is in the background. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

overspray in this sensitive environment.”

This selective, curative approach seemed to be working as the course was 99 percent weed-free on my tour around the links, and Bass was hard-pressed to identify any really tough turf management challenges at the course. After nudging him further, he did acknowledge that armyworms were the worst in the Panhandle than any other place he'd been from Tallahassee to Naples.

He said, “People told me that armyworms can be a problem with new turf and grow-in and they were right. But I still take a cautious approach and monitor the damage until the extent of the infestation is known. Mr. Clark concurs with a threshold-level approach to minimize pesticide use. When I treat I generally rotate Talstar and low rates of Orthene. I tried Di-Pel, but it took a little too long and the damage became unacceptable.”

Bass also said, “I do have some torpedo-grass problems that were self-inflicted. Fill dirt excavated around one of the original lakes on site had some torpedograss infestation and the dirt got used on the course before we had a chance to fumigate it. However, we keep an eye on known spots and make several applications of Drive during grow-





The par-5, 15th hole doglegs around a wetland from tee to green. The wetlands are hand-pruned at least twice a year. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

ing season, which has been keeping it in check.”

Overall Bass maintains he is blessed with a great sandy site that drains well. Among

other things this was once forestland harvested for paper production. Most of it is sandy and well drained. Bass says only two or three holes at the

lower end of the property have heavier soils that require close moisture management. He says there are at least three micro-environments on the site

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## Fun Facts



*Bryce Bass – Future Superintendent? Photo by Shane Bass*

Here are some things you may not know about our cover story superintendent

**Car:** Ford F-150

**The last good movie I saw:** Finding Nemo

**I stay home to watch:** FSU Sports

**The book I've been reading:** The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boynton

**Favorite meal:** Rock shrimp and corn fritters (Dixie Crossroads, Titusville)

**Favorite performers:** Jimmy Buffet

**Prized possessions:** My family

**Personal Heroes:** My parents

**Nobody knows that I:** Would rather be surfing

**I'm better than anyone else when it comes to:** Fishing (That's for TC & BJ)

**I'd give anything to meet:** Flip Pallet

**My fantasy is:** To work on a golf course that doesn't allow carts

**The one thing I can't stand:** People who are lazy or liars

**If I could change one thing about myself:** I would learn to count to 10 before I speak

**My most irrational act:** Anytime I don't count to 10 before speaking

**My most humbling experience:** My son being born

**The words that best describe me:** Loyal, passionate and dependable.



*Florida Green Cover Photographer Daniel Zelazek shown here in his pre-dawn set up at St. James Bay, which resulted in this issue's cover picture. Photo by Shane Bass.*

water quality, his wells are also used to measure the water table levels and he reports these depths twice monthly to the Northwest Water Management District. It wasn't a formal requirement, but he wanted to stay ahead of the curve and demonstrate a proactive approach to working with regulators.

The irrigation system has 711 heads, mostly part circle, which were strategically located so that irrigation water would not carry into the wetlands and uplands, and the 15 lakes are interconnected so that the surface water at the low end of the property can be pumped back up the line and be recirculated allowing more filtering of the water before it leaves the property. There are no deep wells for recharging the irrigation lake.

By providing 85 acres of open turf area in the densely wooded area, the golf course has created lots of "edge habitat" which helps to increase biodiversity in the area. Bass says wildlife ranges from deer, bobcat, coyotes, foxes and an occasional bear to rabbits, squirrels and many species of birds. I saw a couple of hawks, an osprey and hundreds of perching birds on the course, including an eastern bluebird.

As man and nature learn to co-exist on amicable terms, Bass is working on a solution to a unique problem. He said, "Of course we love the wildlife; it's part of what this is all about. But right now I am stumped trying to find a way to keep the young coyote cubs from chewing (teething) on our bunker rake handles."

In a part of Florida where time moves just a little slower and rapid development even slower, St. James Bay has preserved small pieces of man's history on the land, and even larger expanses of the native land itself. It's a guarantee that this part of Florida's coast will not be forgotten at all.



*Maintenance friendly – this fairway bunker on the first hole is one of only 13 with extensive fingering out of the total of 60 bunkers on the course. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

requiring different irrigation and nutrient management approaches to maintain good healthy turf and not waste resources.

The numerous preserved wetland areas are pruned back at least twice a year by hand to keep sight lines open and shot-making over them possible. The series of marshes and lakes provides the surface water used for irrigation, although an agreement is in place for the course to take effluent

as needed from the nearby town of Carrabelle in the very near future. Taking advantage of the filtering effect of properly managed turfgrass will provide efficient disposal of the town's effluent and Bass reports that the water quality sampling in his monitoring wells required under the Audubon Sanctuary program has shown a decline in background nitrate levels already as the turf has matured.

Bass says that besides monitoring