Number 5
Lake Wales C.C.
Par 3, 142 yards
Photo by Daniel Zelazek
The Lake Wales Country Club is located a few miles east of U.S. Highway 27 on Florida Route 60 in eastern Polk County. Perched on the rolling sandy hills of the Central Florida Ridge, the club is yet another historical golfing landmark of the 1920s. How ironic that our 2008 spring and summer cover story selections by the North Florida and Ridge chapters should put two 1923 golf courses designed by Donald Ross back to back. The hallmark parkland-type layouts are similar in some traditional ways, but the geography and topographical features render them unique. The property was purchased in 1980 by the Ben Hill Griffin Company and, ever since, the company has been dedicated to making improvements to serve the members. In 1983 a new
...the orange and blue tee markers... were a sure sign of a Bull Gator booster at work.
Jim Rowland, Class A Golf Course Superintendent

Originally from: Dublin, GA.

Personal: Wife, Kem and two sons, J. Roy (18) and Chris (15). My dad is a retired physician who also served as a state representative and a U.S. congressman for 12 years, and mom takes care of dad.

Education: BS in Agronomy from the University of Georgia, 1978


Professional Affiliations: Member of the GCSAA and Ridge GCSA. 4th Degree Black Belt member of Victory Tae Kwan Do Chung Do Dwan.

Goals & Accomplishments: Keep doing what I do and make sure my sons have the best opportunities in life. Continue my study and advancement in Tae Kwan Do – it’s great for mental and physical conditioning.

Work philosophy and advice: Work hard. Be hands on. Interact with your crew. Work with them. Listen to them. Don’t put work ahead of your family. Take your time. Don’t make hasty decisions on work or life.

Memorable moments: Traveling to Bloomington, IL to test for my 4th Degree Black Belt and performing my forms and sparring requirements for Grandmaster Park from Korea.

Hobbies & community involvement: I love to play golf (Jim's a single-digit handicap). The whole family is involved in Tae Kwan Do. We are members of the First United Methodist Church

Master Golf Professional and General Manager Bob Forward and Jim Rowland, Class A superintendent form a winning team at the Lake Wales Country Club. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Rowland says that his owner understands the challenges posed by Mother Nature since they have been in the citrus business forever. A sandy, well-drained soil profile also means a potential haven for nematodes and mole crickets.

Currently Rowland applies Curfew on 10 to 15 acres each year including the greens and then tees, fairways and roughs as needed. Chronic areas are often given a little extra fertilizer to help outgrow any potential weak spots. Mole cricket control is accomplished by making Top Choice applications.

Jim Rowland, Class A Golf Course Superintendent

Rowland says that he is fortunate that his owner understands the challenges posed by Mother Nature since they have been in the citrus business forever.
and following up by spot-treating any lingering or returning hot spots. In fact, spot-treating pests and weeds is the preferred method of pest control on the course.

Cultural and fertility programs are the staple of good turf management and Rowland uses the consulting services of the legendary turf guru Ralph White to make sure he doesn’t stray from the tried-and-true basics. Rowland aerifies the greens four times a year, pulling cores twice and using solid needle-quad tines in the heavier-play winter season for less surface disruption. The tees are aerified twice and the fairways once each year.

The greens and tees are fertilized monthly at approximately 1 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, which is the recommended annual rate for greens in the region. The fairways are fertilized four times a year and the roughs twice, also at the same rate. The greens and tees are also spiked biweekly and verticut as needed.

Since the club is located in a more rural central Florida area, which is prone to colder temperatures, TifDwarf was the turf of choice during the most recent renovation of the greens in order to facilitate winter overseeding. Also, with a staff of only 13 for 120 acres, this variety is also less demanding in terms of frequent brushing, verti-grooming and light topdressing demanded by the denser, thatch-producing ultradwarf varieties. Some turf managers might call this turf choice – “right plant, right place.”

Those are the nuts and bolts of the turf maintenance at Lake Wales. Straightforward, good basic programs, but what makes it really work efficiently

Straightforward, good basic programs, but what makes them really work efficiently are the relationships from top to bottom.

Resident villas and early morning shadows highlight the first hole at the Lake Wales Country Club. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.
'Jim is somebody special. He has an amazing ability to maintain the course in great shape in a cost-effective manner with a crew two-thirds the size of most comparable golf clubs. He’s a hard worker who is out there working alongside his crew doing whatever it takes to get the job done.'

Bob Forward
PGA Master Professional

is the relationships from top to bottom among the ownership, management and staff.

Rowland truly appreciates the loyalty, longevity, morale and teamwork of his small staff which has seven members including himself with more than 10 years with the club. I think it’s the first time I ever listed all the employees as key members of the staff in the Course Facts box. He said, “I am extremely blessed to have such a great group of longtime employees. They are really good at what they do.”

Bob Forward, the club’s general manager and master golf professional, is a real “Charlie Hustle” type of guy. When he’s not taking care of the members, or organizing golf outings for local groups, or serving as the chairman of the U.S. Senior Open Section tournament, he finds time to

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ride the course in a cart with a spray tank to spot spray weeds. He knows a small staff can’t cover all the bases all the time on the 120-acre property, so he pitches in whenever he can.

When I was touring the course with Jim, Forward came up and was asking about how long it took for the herbicide to work and how many days he should wait for the weeds to turn color so he could make a follow-up ride to check for any weeds he might have missed. He also had some comments about Jim as a partner in the club management team.

Forward said, “Jim is somebody special. He has an amazing ability to maintain the course in great shape in a cost-effective manner with a crew two-thirds the size of most comparable golf clubs. He’s a hard worker who is out there working alongside his crew doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

“We are proud of our course and our whole operation. We annually host the Ben Hill Griffin Invitational which is the largest event in Polk County, and we have also hosted the NAIA small-college regional championships including the Webber College Invitational, the U.S. Senior Sectional, the Senior Mid Am, and the Florida Junior Tournament. Our members really get behind these events and even provide food, fill divots and cheer the kids along.” In return, the club is member oriented; it’s all about service to our members.”

Rowland returned the compliment, “Bob generates more play for our golf course during the slower summer season through his golf and business contacts than anyone I know. Obviously, you are seeing him out here today spot spraying goosegrass in his spare time to help the cause. The bottom line is we both like what we do and we’re passionate about the game and the golf course.”

I asked Rowland how he got into the business. He responded, “I have been playing golf since I was 9 years old. In high school I worked at the Dublin CC. The summer before college I worked at the Sea Palm course on St. Simons Island, and I continued playing golf in college and my summer work at the Dublin CC. Finally, I abandoned my history major and decided to be an agronomist.

Along the way Rowland had some profound mentors for guidance. He said, “My dad was a big influence. He always told me that you had to work hard to achieve things in life. For some
While keeping up with the new products and techniques, Ralph (White) and I still believe that mastering the agronomic basics is the key to having healthy turfgrass.

“G.C. Horn showed me the cultural practices needed to maintain good turf. Ralph White taught me that some of the best superintendents are the ones who are hands-on: mowing greens and changing cups. Ralph still consults with our course twice a year in the spring and fall. While keeping up with the new products and techniques, Ralph and I still believe that mastering the agronomic basics is the key to having healthy turfgrass.”

I also asked Rowland about his...
### FUN FACTS

**Fun Facts from Jim Rowland, a Black Belt Master**

1. **Vehicle:** 2000 Ford F-150 company truck  
2. **I stay home to watch:** The American Idol  
3. **Favorite meal:** Fried pork chops with rice, gravy and baked beans  
4. **Favorite performers:** The Doobie Brothers  
5. **Prized possessions:** 4th Degree (Master) Black Belt  
6. **Personal Heroes:** My mother and father for 62 years of marriage  
7. **Nobody knows that I:** Have had a pacemaker since 1990.  
8. **If I could do it over:** I would have studied more in college  
9. **The thing that I can’t stand:** People who lie and steal.  
10. **My most humbling experience:** Watching my son J. Roy win the gold medal in sparring at Cedar Rapids, Iowa at the Tae Kwan Do Junior Olympics.  
11. **Words that best describe me:** Laid back, thoughtful, deliberate, decision-maker.

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**Don’t step on Superman’s cape and don’t mess around with “them”. The black-belted Rowland family from the left: J. Roy (3rd degree), Kem (2nd degree), Chris (3rd degree) and Jim (4th degree).**
local Ridge Chapter and the value of being a member. He responded, “I think chapter meetings and events are a great way for all of us to communicate with each other on the problems we face and the new products and methods that are out there. I know that Paul Hickman, Bobby Ellis and Alan Puckett and others have helped me over the years. You always learn something if you just take the time to participate.”

Rowland became a very capable golfer, sporting a 1 handicap a few years ago. He said due to family obligations, all the course renovations and lack of playing time, his handicap has ballooned to a 6 or 8. But he has found a way to stay mentally sharp and in good physical shape. He practices Tae Kwon Do (TKD).

In fact it is a pursuit for the whole family to enjoy together. While Jim is a 4th-degree black belt master, his wife Kem is a 2nd degree and sons J. Roy and Chris are both hold 3rd degrees. Tae

A view of the 17th green with the 10th hole in the background. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.
Kwon Do has provided the family with some very memorable moments.

Rowland said, “We were introduced to TKD at a Cub Scout meeting. J. Roy took a liking to it and we became TKD parents shuttling him to practice five days a week. He began serious training in 1996 in competitive TKD which requires mastering Forms (required movements) and Sparring (hand to hand combat). In 1999 at the AAU Junior Olympics in Cedar Rapids, Iowa he took sixth place in Forms out of a field of 2000 competitors, but the highlight of my life so far as a proud dad was when he won the Gold medal in Sparring.”

“I also took up competitive TKD up until 2002 when I won a gold medal in sparring and a silver medal in forms at a state tournament. But my most anxious and nerve-wracking experience in TKD was last April when I flew to Bloomington, Illinois to test for my 4th degree black belt and being judged by

The native sand bunkers on the par-4, 6th hole and the rest of the course drains so well that play can resume in 30 minutes after a heavy rain. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.
Several generations of young bald eagles have been born and fledged in the nest on the 18th tee. Photo by Roger Able.

One of the bald eagles that has been coming down in January to spend the winter at the Lake Wales C.C. Photo by Roger Able.

Grand Master Park, who flew in from Korea just to judge me and four other candidates for advancement. It was both a very trying and yet educational experience to be under the watchful eye of the Grand Master.”

Meanwhile the Lake Wales Country Club thrives under the watchful eye of 24-year veteran Jim Rowland who calls himself “a pretty laid-back” guy.

That may be an easy call for a guy with a 4th-degree black belt who can focus his mind and energy on the task at hand and respects his co-workers’ contributions as well.

A large stand of African sunflowers screens the driving range practice area. The blossoms are at their biggest and best during the winter. Photo by Joel Jackson.

This leaning oak tree was left as a reminder of the historic 2004 hurricane season when Lake Wales was the intersection of three storm tracks. The club lost more than 500 trees in Hurricane Charley. Photo by Joel Jackson.

One of the two families of Sandhill Cranes that call the club’s fairways home. Photo by Joel Jackson.