



Hole 16 is the number-one handicap hole on the course. A 549-yard, par five that challenges you from every tee. Photo by Daniel Zelazek

Bring Your 'A' Game and Your Camera to Tampa Palms G&CC

Twenty-three years ago, noted architect Arthur Hills carved out a challenging 7,004-yard course in the wooded wetland wilderness just north of Tampa.

The multi-faceted property, now owned and operated by ClubCorp, Inc., has 25 guest suites in the clubhouse building, ample meeting space for conferences and events, private amenities for its country club members and a golf course that will require your best effort.

The diversity of the facility itself is matched only by the diversity of the teeming wildlife that can be enjoyed while chasing par down the tree lined fairways. I have been to Tampa Palms on several occasions, mostly to cover the West Coast GCSA's Annual Bud Quandt Tournament. I always come away with photos or sightings of several wildlife species. On my cover story visit in late February I saw critters from a half-dozen 8-to-10-foot alligators to playful otters. Superintendent Bill Kistler said earlier in the day he spied a buck and a doe and a bald eagle. Tampa Palms has been a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary since 1993.

Because the course was built in a lowland setting, 11 lakes covering 68 acres were excavated to provide enough fill to raise the course above the wetlands. Kistler recounted meeting the architect on the 15th anniversary of Tampa Palms. As they played the course, Kistler said Hills winked as he said, "I knew we had to raise up the fairways because of the wetlands, but I can't figure out why I didn't make them wider."

"He used up every golf ball in his bag and mine by the 16th hole," Kistler said. But with four sets of tees on every hole, golfers can easily find a yardage that fits their skill level.

Golfing challenges aside, being in a wetland setting has its pros and cons when it comes to turf management.

On the down side, the extreme heat and humidity in the summer keep Kistler and staff on the look out for possible disease outbreaks. "We have been following a fungus control program by Syngenta," he said. "It is a preventive program for bermuda greens and provides a good guide for understanding conditions and rotating products to provide maximum protection against disease damage."

Kistler says they also have to be mindful of shade issues from the trees as they mature. "We have been able maintain good light conditions with strategic thinning of tree canopies. Back in 2001, the city of Tampa allowed the removal of 50 trees that were critically impacting several greens," he said.



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COVER STORY

On the plus side of the location, because of the naturally organic, heavy soils, when irrigation restrictions — such as the current three days per week watering of greens and tees, and twice per week on fairways and roughs — it is easier to maintain the soil moisture in the turf root zone.

“Since we can only automatically irrigate three times

SUPERINTENDENT FACTS



BILL KISTLER

Originally From: Vandalia, Ohio

Family: Wife Sharon and stepsons, Dustin and Shawn Barrett

Education: Turf certificate from U. of Georgia.

Graduated from American Institute of Banking

Employment: 2002-present, Superintendent Tampa Palms G&CC; 2000-2002, Assistant Superintendent (AS), Countryside CC, Clearwater; 1998-2000 AS, IGM Tarpon Springs GC; 1993-1998 (Crew, Spray Tech, Foreman and finally AS), Dunedin CC.

Professional Affiliations & Offices Held: Current FGCSA president; past president Florida West Coast GCSA; GCSAA Member Relations Committee; Received 2004 & 2006 ClubCorp Super Star Award.

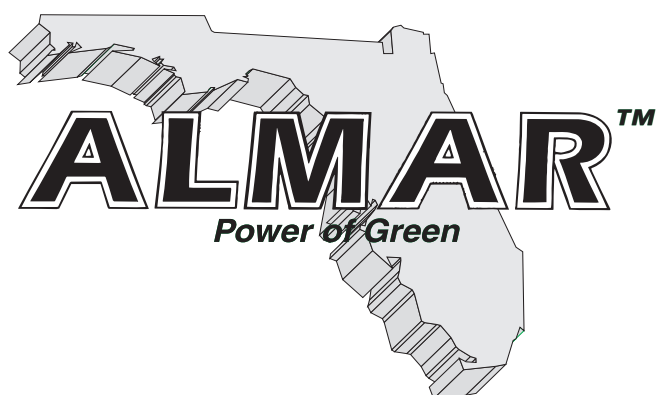
Work philosophy and advice: Don't take things so seriously you don't have fun with what you do. Manage your time and balance work and personal life. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes superintendents wait until it's too late before asking for help.

Goals: Accomplishing one goal of giving back to the industry as I complete volunteer board service to the West Coast and Florida GCSA. It has been an honor and personally rewarding for me to serve.

Hobbies & Interests: Golf and watching THE Ohio State University football and basketball games.



View from behind the Par 4, 4th hole. At 447 yards it is the number 2 handicap hole. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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TAMPA PALMS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Location: Tampa

Ownership:

ClubCorp
USA, Inc.

Playing policy:

Private

**Average of
rounds per
year:** 30,000

**Number of
holes:** 18,
7,004 yards,
Par: 72,
Slope/Rating:
140/74.8

Designed by:

Arthur Hills,
constructed
by Wadsworth
Construction,
opened 1987

Management

Team: Club

Manager David Kupstas; Club President Steve Brantley; Green Chairman Tom White; Head Golf Professional David Glandt; Golf Course Superintendent Bill Kistler

Major projects: 2006 Bunker renovation; 2008 Enlarged practice range tee area and added target greens

Acreage under maintenance: 88; total property: 277

Greens: 3 acres. average size: 6,878 sq.ft.; turf type: TifEagle; HOC: .120 - .130 inches; no overseeding; green speed goal: 9.5 - 11.0.

Tees: 5 acres; turf types: Tifway 419; HOC: .5 inches; overseeding: rye blend @ 200 lbs/acre.

Fairways and Roughs: Fairways: 50 acres; roughs: 30 acres; turf types: Tifway 419, HOC: .5 inches on



Maintenance Staff of Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club.

fairways, 1-2 inches on roughs; no overseeding.

Bunkers: 42.

Sand type: GASH GA-26. Raked with Sand Pro and by hand.

Native Areas: 135 acres of wetlands and woods bordering the golf holes.

**Waterways/
Lakes/Ponds:** 11, 68 acres, maintained by Lake Masters.

Irrigation: Well; Flowtronex

pumping system; Toro OSMAC Site Pro control system; Proplus fertigation system.

Water Management/Conservation: Southwest Florida Water Management District – Phase II Modified: Greens & Tees 3x per week. Fairways & Roughs 2x per week.

Staff: 13 full time. 40 hrs per week. No overtime. No part-time employees.

Communications: Daily meetings with crew and pro shop. Weekly department head staff meeting. Weekly one-on-one with general manager. Monthly Golf & Green Committee meetings. Daily interaction with members on the course and in the clubhouse area.

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per week, we do have to supplement by hand watering areas that show signs of wilt, which is allowed under the SWFWMD's modified phase-2 restrictions we are currently under," Kistler said. It also means that we have to increase our scheduled run times on our elevated greens and tees built of sandier material and tend to dry out quicker than the fairways."

Kistler and staff also do seasonal mapping of insect infestations for mole crickets, army and sod web worms. By pinpointing specific areas of concern, pesticide applications can be targeted to specific areas, saving labor and material costs and minimizing environmental inputs.

Cultural practices like aerifying and topdressing are not much different from any other course that strives for high-performing putting surfaces with greens speed goals of 9.5 to 11 on the stimpmeter.

I did find one twist that was new to me: During the "Closed Mondays" light topdressing of greens in the growing season, Kistler says they run a roller over the greens after the topdressing is dry. "The vibrations of the roller really help the sand grains to move down into the canopy followed by a light syringing. Then after the irrigation cycle at night, the sand is really invisible the next day and we pick up very little — if any — when we mow."

Kistler's greens fertility program calls for a weekly spoon feeding of 0.1 lb. of nitrogen with Plant Food Company's liquid with 1 to 3 oz. of

WHY SETTLE FOR SECOND BEST?

Shade Tolerance

Study by Clemson University

Overall Shade Tolerance Rank

Overall shade tolerance rank of 42 bermudagrass cultivars after 8 weeks of full sun (control) and 64 percent continuous shade at the Clemson University greenhouse complex.

Cultivar	Rank [†]	Cultivar	Rank [†]
Celebration	6	Mohawk	1
TifGrand	5	SWI-1001	1
TiftNo. 1	5	Tifway	1
Transcontinental	5	Midlawn	1
SWI-1003	4	TifSport	1
Sunbird	4	OR 2002	1
Aussie Green	3	Ashmore	1
MS-Choice (Bullseye)	3	CIS-CD5	1
Princess 77	3	CIS-CD6	1
SWI-1045	3	CIS-CD7	1
SWI-1041	3	Panama	1
SWI-1012	3	La Paloma	1
B-14	2	Yukon	1
Riveria	2	OKC 70-18	1
SWI-1046	2	NuMex Sahara	1
TiftNo. 3	2	SWI-1014	0
Southern Star	2	GN-1	0
TiftNo. 2	2	Patriot	0
Sunstar	1	Sundevil	0
SWI-1044	1	SR 9554	0
FMC-6	1	Arizona Common	0

[†] Rank indicates number of times a cultivar placed in the top statistical category when grown under 64 percent continuous shade. Greatest shade tolerance = 6, greatest shade sensitivity = 0.

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The greens are verticut lightly each week during the growing season and core aerified two or three times a year between April and September. Solid tires are used year-round on the greens to reduce compaction. The tees and fairways are core aerified each spring. As a matter of good stewardship all of the cultural, nutrient and pest management programs are adjusted as needed for weather conditions to maximize the benefits to the turf and to minimize any environmental impacts.

Relaying those changes and implications requires good communication between the superintendent and his staff and the rest of the management team. To that end Kistler says he has daily crew meetings and checks in with the pro shop each day. He added, "It is critical to maintain good relations with

all departments at a club and with the customers. I try to interact daily with our members as they play the course. They may see something or have a question that I can respond to for their enjoyment of the course.

"The folks in golf operations and food and beverage often hear comments before anyone else, so it's good to check in with them frequently also to learn what the members are saying. We do have weekly department head staff meetings and monthly golf and greens committee meetings to stay on top of programs, event calendars and any issues."

For those advocating that superintendents need to become more educated in the business side of operating a golf club, Kistler has a head start. He came to the superintendent profession by way of a degree in banking and a turf certificate from the University of Georgia.

"After moving to Florida I wasn't sure of my career path," he said. "I

"Don't take everything too seriously. Have fun with what you do. ... And above all, don't be afraid to ask for help."

took a job at the Dunedin CC mowing roughs so I could also play free golf. Before I knew it I was promoted first to spray tech, then foreman and eventually assistant superintendent.

"I had found something I liked to do."

Kistler credits Dale Reash, longtime superintendent at the Countryside CC in Clearwater with as being his biggest mentor. "Dale was the person who had the greatest influence on my professional development. He prepared me for that next step to become a superintendent"

After two years under Reash's guidance, Kistler took over at Tampa Palms in 2002.

Kistler appreciates his growth and development in a career he has come to love and one of his goals is to repay the profession and those in it that have helped him so much. His debt is being paid in full. He has served the West Coast GCSA in all of its offices and is currently serving as the president of the Florida GCSA. Kistler is also a member of the GCSAA Member Relations Committee.

Kistler offers these words of advice to anyone who pursues a career as a superintendent.

"Don't take everything too seriously. Have fun with what you do. Manage your time wisely to be effective at work and have balance with your personal life. And above all, don't be afraid to ask for help. Too often superintendents wait too long before asking for help.

"In today's market I've been asking others how they are dealing with budget and staff reductions for one, and still getting the jobs done and meeting expectations. Over the years I have often compared notes with other superintendents and vendors, on what

FUN FACTS

Vehicle: 2005 Ford 150

The last good movie I saw: "Avatar" in 3D

I stay home to watch: 24

The book I've been reading: *Game Plan for Life – Your Personal Playbook for Success* by Joe Gibbs

Favorite meal: Steak and potatoes

Prized possessions: Father-in-law's Cadillac DeVille

Personal heroes: My parents

Nobody knows that I: Played the drums for 20 years

I'm better than anyone else when it comes to: Listening to people

If I could do it over: I would meet my wife Sharon sooner

My fantasy is: Going into space

The one thing I can't stand: People who just talk to hear themselves talk

The words that best describe me: Integrity and dedication

My dream foursome would be: Fuzzy Zoeller, John Daly, Charles Barkley (I think I can beat Barkley)

My best fish story: You won't believe the one that got away

My most amazing golf shot: Ricochet shot off the one rock on No 17, par 3 lakebank at Farmlinks. It landed on the green and I made a par.



Bill and Sharon Kistler.

Continues on Page 17



Number 14 is a long, tight par-4 guarded by five of the 42 bunkers on the course. Photo by Daniel Zelazek

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Saw several of these big gators grabbing some rays.



A PHOTO ESSAY

By Joel Jackson

Wild turkey flocks, left, are a common sight in the roughs; Great Egret, below left, stalks prey on No. 18; Little Blue Heron, below, walks on water. Turtles, above on facing page, sunning on a chilly day. Later an otter was seen playing in the lily pads.

Other wildlife seen that day but not pictured here include: anhinga, cormorant, limpkin, moorhen, osprey, otter, red shouldered hawk, tri-colored heron, white ibis, wood ibis and yellow crowned night herons.





From Page 15

they are seeing out there in terms of turf problems and potential solutions.”

After learning how Kistler brings his “A” Game to the golf maintenance operations every day at Tampa Palms, I grabbed my camera and spent the next two hours snapping pictures in this wildlife sanctuary which doubles as a golf course.

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