



*Shingle Creek Hotel and Golf Course.
Photo Courtesy of Shingle Creek.*

SHINGLE CREEK GOLF COURSE: LINKING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

The Shingle Creek Golf Course is located a few miles east of the Orange County Convention Center so familiar to most of us as the venue every three years for the Golf Industry Show. The 18-hole, Dave Harmon layout surrounds the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel, one of seven Orlando area properties operating under the Rosen banner. The course opened in 2003, so it's relatively young in comparison to some of the nearby golf courses, but the land on which it lies has some interesting historical ties to the region.

The Shingle Creek watershed is the natural headwaters of the Florida Everglades some 140 miles to the south. In the early 1800s, early Central Florida settlers were attracted to the area for

its abundant game and fishing, the vast cypress tree stands for lumber and the creek as a water source. These early pioneers used the area's resources well by harvesting the trees and floating them downstream to a nearby saw mill, where they were made into shingles for their homes, hence the name, "Shingle Creek."

Even though this southern region of Orange County has seen plenty of development since the 1970s, Shingle Creek has been protected by the installation of three bordering mitigation wetlands and the course design, which mandated the retention of runoff not only from the hotel property but also from the tourist-oriented International Drive area.

The water is held and filtered by the

golf course's 16 lakes and only released when the lake levels rise above the two outlet weirs that slowly release excess water into the mitigation wetlands. To aid in cleaning the water while it's flowing through the golf course property, the lakes have abundant aquatic plants along the shorelines and bubblers to help improve the dissolved oxygen content.

Rickey Craig, the golf course superintendent, has been on board since the course opened. During our ride through of the course, he showed me how he has learned to adapt the course even more to its surroundings. Craig explained that the land was relatively flat and composed of heavy soils, which is to **See SHINGLE CREEK, pg. 14**

SHINGLE CREEK GOLF CLUB



Shingle Creek Golf Maintenance Staff. Photo by Joel Jackson

Location: Orlando

Ownership: Rosen Hotels & Resorts
Playing policy: Resort (avg rounds 47,000/year)

Numbers: 18 holes, 7,149 yards, par 72

Slope/Rating: 139/75.1

Designed by Dave Harmon. Constructed by Golf Course Consultants

Opened: 2003.

Management Team: Director of Golf Dave Scott; Head Golf Professional Dave Smiley; Golf Course Superintendent Rickey Craig

Ongoing projects: Seasonal bunker sand replacement and lake bank stabilization and plantings.

Acreage under maintenance: 114 (total acreage: 230)

Greens: 4.0 acres. Turf type: TifEagle. HOC 0.09 –0.110 in. No overseeding.

Green speed goals: 10-plus

Tees: 5.0 acres. Turf type: Tifway 419. HOC 0.350 –.0450 inches. Overseeded with ryegrass at 450lbs/Acre

Fairways (25 acres) and Roughs

(80 acres). Turf: Tifway 419. HOC 0.400 –0.450 (Fairways) and 1.5–2.0” (Roughs). No overseeding.

Bunkers: 90. Hand and machine raking.

Lakes/Ponds: There are lakes on 16 holes. Treated by outside contractor. Lakes have bubblers and more fountains being considered for aesthetics and aeration.

Irrigation: Source: reclaimed. Flowtronex pump station. Controls: Toro Site Pro with Osmac controllers. 900+/- heads. Fertigation for mostly minor nutrient applications.

Water Conservation: Under SFWMD guidelines. Use wetting agents.

Staff including superintendent: 21.

Key staff: Assistant Mitchell Leininger, Equipment Mgr.: Matt Bean, Spray Tech: Mike Thomas; Irrigation Tech: Travis Weitz; Admin Asst: Kathy Martin.

Arrowhead plants along the 17th hole shoreline help filter nutrients from the water. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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be expected in relatively low-lying areas near creeks and wetlands. During periods of heavy rain when lake levels rise, the water table also rises along the shorelines.

These saturated areas become problematic to mow with standard mowing equipment, so instead Craig has begun creating “mini-wetland” plantings of cypress trees and cordgrass in mulched beds. This has eliminated any erosion of the banks and preserved a neat, clean appearance. Another advantage of these converted areas is the creation of more habitat areas for wildlife.

Craig said, “We have a variety of critters that visit the golf course depending on the water level in the creek and wetlands. We have recorded deer, wild hogs, fox, turkey, alligators, turtles and a whole slew of birds from Sandhill Cranes to those little bitty birds. The hotel maintains a trail that our guests can use to hike over to the creek and along the edge of the wetlands.”

Craig said while there are not large native areas on the golf course proper, the landscaping – including lots of trees – helps to separate and define each hole, giving each its own unique character. With 16 lakes, there are plenty of doglegs and carries over water to challenge players of all skill

levels. Thanks to Shingle Creek’s location near the convention and tourism center of International Drive and nearby Universal Studios, Craig said they were still doing close to 150-200 golfers per day, and this was early August when I toured the course with him.

Craig’s advice to those entering the profession: “Keep it simple. Don’t complicate things. Make a plan and stick to it, and don’t overlook the details.”

Craig’s plan for Shingle Creek includes a solid cultural program that has greens aerified three times a year with a 1.5 x 1.25-inch tine spacing. He estimates they get 9 to 13 percent thatch removal per aerification or close to 30 percent each year.

“At that rate,” he says, “By the third cycle we have to follow up with a roller because the greens are softening up.” Craig says their cleanup program involves sweeping up the plugs, topdressing the greens and then hosing them off with water. Craig added, “This helps move the sand into the holes to avoid mower pick-up and moisten the root zone after it’s been dried out from the open holes. We find the greens recover quicker.”

Craig’s verticutting regimen is to double verticut every other week during the growing season. They follow a compass

pattern around the green and whatever direction they are going —north-south, east-west, etc — they go up-and-back on the same pass rather than crosscut. In the off week they spike the greens. Fairways and tees are verticut twice a year in the spring and fall. They use the same up and back technique which can really stand the grass up, so they often circle cut the fairways to get a tighter cut.

Craig said pest pressures are fairly low on the property. This was the first year he had to apply Chipco Choice® in all the roughs for mole cricket control. Normally he could just go out with some Orthene® and treat hot spots. Weed control is mainly limited to the landscaped areas and along the shorelines in the new cypress and cordgrass areas.

The fertility program is affected by the heavy soils, so the fairways and roughs generally need only about 3.5 lb. of nitrogen a year, and 5-6 lb. of N on the tees. The greens get a more typical 9-10 lb. of N per year. Primo plays a big role in keeping the turf tight and playable. They apply 1.5-2.0 oz. of Primo per acre on the greens in March and by August they’re up 4 oz./acre.

The fairways are also sprayed with Primo stepping up the per-acre rates from 6 to 9 to



SUPERINTENDENT FACTS

Originally from: Center Hill, FL.

Family: Wife, Wendy; sons, Isaac (6) and Samuel (2)

Education: 2002, A.S. Golf Course Operations, Lake City Community College (now Florida Gateway College); 1995-98 Liberty College

Employment: August 2003–Present, Superintendent Shingle Creek G.C.; 2002 Foreman Grand Cypress Resort; 1995–2002, Crew at London Downs CC, Forest, VA; Disney Palm Course and TPC Sawgrass (OJT).

Professional Affiliations & Offices Held: Current vice president of the Central Florida GCSA. Member of GCSAA since 1999.

Goals: Continue to provide the highest quality in turf maintenance and operations and to progress within the golf industry

Memorable moments: Getting married and the birth of my sons.

Hobbies & Interests: Coaching T-Ball, playing softball, fishing and attending United Community Fellowship Church



RICKEY CRAIG

Photo by Joel Jackson.

Aquatic plants, bunkers, shrubs and a forest of trees frame the 9th green. Photo by Joel Jackson.



11 oz. per acre in May, June and August.

Initially Craig's responsibilities were limited to the golf course proper, but after seeing his attention to detail and adaptability he was asked to assume responsibility for the hotel grounds landscaping as well. And soon after that he was placed in charge of the landscaping for all seven of the Rosen hotel properties in the area.

Craig got his start in golf while pursuing a sports management degree at Liberty University. He liked playing baseball, while his roommate was a golfer from Michigan. He got finagled into playing golf one day, and he was hooked. He took a part-time job at nearby London Downs GC, and fell even more in love with the maintenance aspect of the sport.

Craig said, "I was a quick learner and evidently excelled at all the tasks I was assigned because superintendent John Scott said to me one day, 'Why are you wasting your time here? You need to go to Lake City and get your degree!' To this day I don't know if he knows the impact he had on my life and career."



One of the many naturalized shoreline beds which attracted this Great Blue Heron. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Craig also did some work at a few other notable places during his career. He had to qualify for Lake City's GLO program by working on Disney's Palm Course and he did an OJT stint at TPC Sawgrass. After graduation he became a foreman at Grand Cypress, where Superintendent Tom Alex has been known to produce top notch superintendents. From there it was a short trip over to Shingle Creek where he is

enjoying his work today.

Rickey Craig is another of the young superintendents we have profiled this year. He works hard and he has established his credibility and performance with his organization. Just as importantly for our industry he is willing to step up and volunteer to help keep our associations strong for the future.



Landscape beds and trees screen hole No. 10 from the 11th and 12th holes. Photo by Joel Jackson.

CRAIG'S FUN FACTS



- Vehicle:** Chevy Z-71 Pickup Truck
- I stay home to watch:** Florida Gator Football
- Last good movie I saw:** Transformers 2
- Favorite meal:** Steak, sweet potato and salad
- Prized possessions:** My family
- Favorite performers:** My staff
- Nobody knows that I:** It's a secret
- If I could do it over:** Wouldn't change anything
- The one thing I can't stand:** Stupidity
- My fantasy:** Having health, happiness and success
- Words that best describe me:** Dedicated, loyal, planner, OCD
- If I could change anything about myself:** I'd gain a little weight
- My most irrational act:** Not sure
- My most humbling experience:** Birth of my children
- My dream foursome:** My dad and my two sons
- My best fish story:** I've got nothing
- My most amazing golf shot:** Birdied No. 17 at TPC Sawgrass the first time I played it




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Director of Golf Maintenance,
Broken Sound Club, Boca Raton, FL

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Joel Tholund
Superintendent,
Atlantis Golf Course, Atlantis, FL

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