



St. Augustine Shores Golf Club: Where Golf is Still Fun!

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

View from behind the par 4, 413 yard 18th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson.

The St. Augustine Shores course is located just off of U.S. Highway 1 south of the city proper. It has been around since 1973 and is now a member of the Capstone Golf Management group that owns a portfolio of five golf courses – four in Florida and one in Tennessee.

Capstone is a golf course management and development company founded to cater to the value-conscious customer. Its principals realized that the golf industry must build a market to prosper and grow, not simply run a golf course. Quoting the Capstone Web site, “The experts who say the golf industry is in trouble are the same ones who are

servicing the market with expensive greens fees, outrageously priced equipment, and cater to the well-heeled private membership types.”

Capstone takes a different view. The company promotes the game of golf to senior, beginning, and intermediate golfers through strong marketing strategies and highly efficient

...our courses are playable for everyone, conducive to walking, and promote a non-intimidating fun environment.

management techniques in order to provide affordable, accessible and sustainable golf courses.

Capstone further states, “A part of this equation is that our courses are playable for everyone, conducive to walking, and promote a non-intimidating fun environment. By applying our proven formula, Capstone Golf has successfully increased rounds, revenues, profitability and most importantly customer satisfaction at each facility we operate.”

Certainly in a time when golf participation has been flat and an era of overbuilding golf courses has come to and end, course

operators can’t keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. Capstone appears to be responding to

SUPERINTENDENT FACTS

Originally from Woodstock, Ga.

Family: Wife, Rachelle. Two daughters: Georgia Grace and Jenna Catherine

Education: A.S. in Golf Operations, Lake City Community College. 1995

Employment: 2008 – Present, Director of Agronomy, Capstone Golf Management Company; 2005 – 2008, Superintendent, Grand Haven GC, Palm Coast;

2001-2005, Superintendent of full course renovation, New Orleans CC, New Orleans, LA; 2000-2001 Superintendent King and Bear, World Golf Village; 1997-2000 Assistant Superintendent, Slammer and Squire World Golf Village; 1995-97 Assistant Superintendent, Isleworth G&CC, Windermere; 1994 OJT Bay Hill Club, Orlando.

Professional Affiliations & Offices Held: Board of Directors Louisiana & Mississippi GCSA; Board of Directors Gulf States GCSA; Member, board member and past president of the North Florida GCSA (2008-2010).

Hobbies & Interests: I really enjoy our family fishing trips and playing golf.



CHRIS MCCRANIE

Photo by Joel Jackson.



Mature pine woodlands frame many holes like the par-3, 5th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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View from behind the par-4, 261-yard 15th hole.
Photo by Joel Jackson.

the challenge with their game plan. Their stable of courses includes Cecil Field in Jacksonville, St. Augustine Shores, Grand Reserve in Bunnell, Wedgefield in east Orlando and Greystone in Nashville, Tenn.

Chris McCranie, our superintendent for this issue, serves as the director of agronomy for Capstone Golf, and he directs only the Florida course-maintenance operations. Superintendents Andy Jackson and Rick Herman oversee the Cecil Field and Grand Reserve courses respectively. Club Manager Ken Genova is temporarily filling in since the Wedgefield superintendent recently retired.

Modest green fees translate into modest maintenance budgets and crowded tee sheets, so you won't find lots of bells and whistles in the maintenance programs. Preemergent and preventive programs give way to more scouting, monitoring and curative chemical applications.

The patrons of the golf courses are more concerned with playability than perfection.

During my recent visit with Chris at St. Augustine Shores I was struck by the almost unanimous sea of smiling happy faces of folks having fun and just enjoying the game of golf for its social interaction and outdoor recreation.

They were just having fun playing golf.

Seeing a bunch of seniors in the clubhouse and on the first tee reminded me how my own parents took up golf after Dad retired at age 65 and, for the next 20 years, enjoyed the camaraderie and socializing at an affordable golf club as a major part of their lives.

McCranie indicated that St. Augustine Shores comprises about 80 acres. The course is bounded by a few homes and pine and oak woodlands. There are no formalized natural areas between holes, but the shorelines of the eleven lakes and ponds are not manicured and left to be natural areas that are rogued out and cut back periodically. The native plant growth provides cover for the gators and other wildlife roaming the ponds.

McCranie says they have a healthy hawk population along with the normal list of songbirds you see on Florida courses. I also saw two active osprey nests on the site and grey squirrels, cardinals, mockingbirds, blue jays and Ron Dodson's "little bitty birds" flitting among the trees.

While McCranie serves as the superintendent at St. Augustine Shores proper his director of agronomy duties make him the central procurement officer for all the Florida courses, buying the necessary supplies at bulk prices and helping to transport and share seasonal equipment among the courses. He makes weekly visits to Orlando and monthly visits to Jacksonville and Bunnell.

McCranie is a 1995 Lake City graduate and has spent the majority of his career in north and central Florida, with four years doing a major renovation and grow-in at the New Orleans Country Club in Louisiana. Says McCranie, "One of my career goals was to do a grow-in. I fulfilled part of that desire when I was an assistant during the grow-in of The Slammer and Squire course at the World Golf Village

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ST. AUGUSTINE SHORES GOLF CLUB



Number 9 and Clubhouse. Photo by Joel Jackson.

St. Augustine Shores Staff. Howie Jones, Paul Kane, Chris McCranie, John Eddy, Vida Sizemore and Zack Large. Photo by Mike Pullen.

Location: St. Augustine

Ownership: J. Michael Pullen II, (Capstone Golf)

Playing policy: Daily Fee; 18 holes, Blue tees 5,659 yards, Par 70, Slope/Rating 112/67.5

Avg. rounds: 50,000/year

Opened: 1973. Course design attributed to Chuck Almony.

Management Team: Club Manager Faye Conklin, Superintendent Chris McCranie

Ongoing projects: Maintaining and upgrading 30-year-old "Block" irrigation system

Acreage under maintenance: 80

Greens: 2.5 acres. Turf type: Tifway 328. HOC .150 - .185 in. Overseeded with Poa trivialis 10 lb./1,000 sq. ft.

Green speed goals: Consistent smooth ball roll.

Tees: 3.0 acres. Turf type – Tifway 419. HOC .45 in. Overseeded with ryegrass at 15-20 lbs/1,000 sq. ft.

Fairways and Roughs: Fwys 30 acres, Tifway 419. Roughs 44.5 acres. Turf types: Tifway 419, common and bahia. No overseeding.

Non-turf areas: 29 bunkers and 11 lakes/ponds. Out-of-play areas including lake banks naturalized. Lakes maintained as needed by outside contractor.

Irrigation: Water source: Wells. 40 hp pumps. Remote controllers. No Central Control system.

Fertility program: Fairways and Roughs – Annual bulk organic application. Tees – 2X/year spring and fall. Greens – 4 granular apps per year with monthly supplemental foliar apps as needed.

Total Staff: Six. Four full time and two part time.

Key staff: Assistant Zack Large, Equipment Tech John Kane.

Crew members/operators: Vida Sizemore, John Eddy and Howie Jones.

in 1997. A few years later, thanks in large part to the recommendations from Bobby Weed and Alan MacCurrach, I got to be the man in charge of the renovation of the New Orleans CC.

"Those gentlemen were instrumental in helping me fulfill that goal and I also have to thank a couple of other mentors who helped shape my career along the way: First, Steve Durand was the superintendent at Marsh Creek where I had a summer job, his thoughtful encouragement got me interested in pursuing a career in golf course maintenance. And once in the business, Buck Buckner at Isleworth and Steve LaFrance at the World Golf Village helped me learn the inside ropes of the industry and I thank them for their help."

Working on a 38-year-old golf course comes with its set of challenges for McCranie. Foremost perhaps is a certain

inconsistency of the greens mix. Various changes to the course over the years have left a variety of soil types which react differently depending on the weather conditions and keep McCranie and staff on their toes. Also the old block irrigation system springs a leak now and again. McCranie says he can't stock too many repair parts because, when they go to replace a bad valve, they discover a new and unique plumbing hookup

and communication are most important. Since they all must rely on each other to get the jobs done efficiently, I asked McCranie about his management style.

"I try to keep an even demeanor. Lots of things can go wrong on a golf course. I try to stay positive and not stress over any setbacks. Don't take it out on others," he replied.

As far as words of wisdom to others seeking a career in turf management,

McCranie had this advice, "Don't complain to anyone; word has a way of getting around. Be thankful for what you have and each day try to do something a little

above and beyond the routine job."

As I wrapped up my interview visit with McCranie on a Tuesday morning and headed out of the clubhouse, golfers were lined up seven deep at the counter and the parking lot was full. Maybe Capstone is on to something here.

Working on a 38-year-old golf course comes with its set of challenges

almost every time.

Including himself, there are six employees at St. Augustine Shores – four full time and two part timers. McCranie and his assistant Zack Large share the pest control and irrigation duties. With small crews at each location, teamwork

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A Live Oak strategically guards the dogleg on the 12th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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Think Ahead.



Speaking of fish stories, this osprey at #1 Tee caught a fish while I waited for Chris. Photo by Joel Jackson.

McCRANIE'S FUN FACTS

Vehicle: 2007 GMC Sierra 2500

I stay home to watch: Georgia Tech Football

Last good movie I saw: "Furry Vengeance"

What I've been reading: *Boat Trader*.

Favorite meal: Maui Wowie Mahi Sandwich at the Sunset Grille, St. Augustine Beach

Prized possessions: My boat, *TIPSEA*

Favorite performers: Pink Floyd, Colt Ford

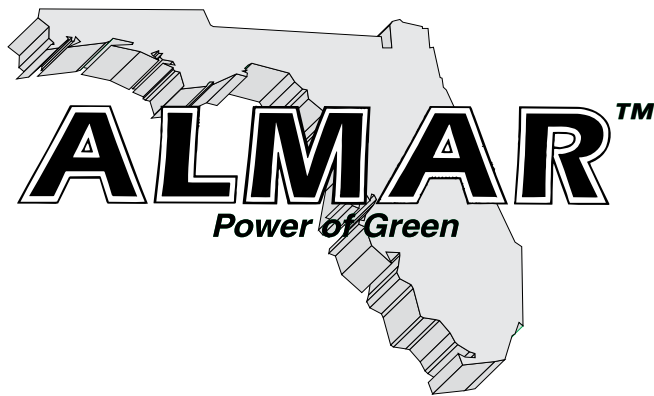
Nobody knows that I: If I told you, everybody would know

The one thing I can't stand: Liars! Always tell the truth no matter how bad it hurts

Words that best describe me: Honest, hard working and humble

My dream foursome would be: My dad, Boo Weekly, Carl Spackler and me

My best fish story: Catching 51 Mahi (dolphin) on a trip last spring



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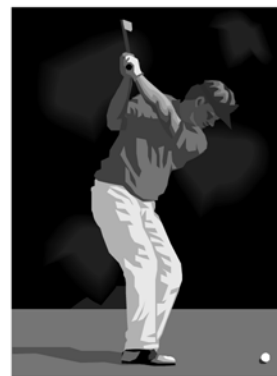
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