

Isla Del Sol - Island of the Sun



Aerial view of Isla Del Sol showing its unique location in Boca Ciega Bay. Photo courtesy of Kevin Sunderman.

Isla Del Sol Golf & Yacht CC FL 08-023 © Golf Shots Unlimited 2008

In the late 1970s, the state of Florida dredged and filled some low, marshy areas in Boca Ciega Bay to provide some anchor points for the Pinellas Bayway complex to provide land access to the southern St. Petersburg Gulf beaches, Tierra Verde, Mullet Key and Ft. De Soto Park at the entrance to Tampa Bay. Isla Del Sol's front golf course is a great green space to balance the high-density housing, and each homeowner has either a golf course or a water view. The historic Don Cesar Hotel

in Pass-a-Grille Beach, built in 1928, is also in full view less than a mile away as you drive from the 11th green to the 12th tee.

The General Electric Company negotiated with the state to do some additional dredging to create some larger islands big enough to develop home sites and a golf course and the Isla Del Sol Yacht & Country Club and a number of condominium communities were born. The Isla Del Sol course was built and opened in 1977 and our host



View of the 8th hole from behind the green. The walk bridge had to be rebuilt after Tropical Storm Debby flooded the course with 17 inches of rain. Photo by Joel Jackson.

superintendent, Kevin Sunderman has called it home since 2005. Kevin actually lives in the Bradenton area so he traverses the Sunshine Skyway Bridge twice a day in his commute to and from work.

I wonder if he's ever thought about using a boat?

In 2007, the TifDwarf greens were converted to SeaIsle Supreme paspalum and Kevin loves the grass. It tolerates the salty air and 100 percent effluent irrigation water, and hardly ever goes off color in the cooler months. The only challenge with the paspalum is managing the paspalum/bermudagrass interface around the greens, which requires vigilant edging and runner control.

Because of the temperature-moderating influence of the bay, the tees are the only turf areas that Sunderman overseeds during the cool season to provide protection for these high-traffic areas. The seed generally goes out in late November to get established before the busy winter golf season gets into full swing.

But even every paradise has issues. I thought the biggest challenge might be the soil profile from the fines dredged up, but according to Sunderman, it is the irrigation system and water availability. The course irrigation system is interconnected with the condo irrigation systems. They are all directly fed from the treatment plant.

The course has two booster pumps to maintain proper operating pressures, but with the demand of all the systems, The course may irrigate a full wall-to-wall cycle only two days a week. The rest of the time, they irrigate on a prioritized, as-needed basis. Add in lower water generated during non-peak seasons and precise irrigation management becomes the key management factor.

Sunderman attempts to coordinate with all the condo associations to develop a workable BMP plan, but he gets very

SUPERINTENDENT FACTS

Meet Kevin Sunderman

Originally from:
New London, Ohio.

Family: Wife Melani. Son Trent (13) and daughter Elise (10).

Education: BS degree from "The" Ohio State University with a major in Turfgrass Science

Employment history: 1998 – 2000 Superintendent at Whetstone GC, Marion, OH; 2000-02 Assistant Superintendent (AS) at Snee Farm CC, Mt. Pleasant, SC; 2002 AS at East Lake Woodlands, Clearwater CC; 2002-03 Investment representative for Edward Jones Investments, Bradenton; 2003-05 AS at TPC Prestancia, Sarasota; 2005 – present Superintendent/Director of Grounds Isla Del Sol Yacht & Country Club.

Professional affiliations/awards: 12-year member of the GCSAA. Served as the Florida West Coast voting delegate in 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Served on the FWCGCSA board since 2006, currently the vice president. I am also a member of the Florida GCSA board since 2008 and currently the Vice President of that organization as well.

Personal philosophy of work: Take the time to consider all sides of an issue and in the end do what is right. Only fight the battles worth fighting. Treat everyone with respect, especially your employees. If they know you sincerely care, they will always be there for you.

Personal/Memorable Moments: Every moment spent with my family. We are very close and do everything together. Knowing that time doesn't stand still, I treasure every moment and take it all in. I'm also very proud to be an alumnus of The Ohio State University. I have a deep sense of pride and belonging that goes way beyond being a sports fan. "How firm thy friendship, O-Hi-O"

Hobbies and Interests: My number one hobby is grilling. I make all my own sauces, rubs and marinades. I also dabble in guitar playing, mostly blues and classic rock. Avid sports fan of college football and the Tampa Bay Rays.



KEVIN SUNDERMAN.

Photo by Joel Jackson.



View from the 3rd Green includes the Sunshine Skyway Bridge and Boca Ciega Bay. Photo by Joel Jackson.

spotty cooperation from the various contract landscape companies.

The cultural programs at Isla Del Sol are in keeping with good stewardship practices most superintendents employ these days. Sunderman has a target of 2.5 pounds of N and 20 pounds of K per year on the greens. He makes four wall-to-wall, slow-release fertilizer applications per year on the rest of the course. The greens are double-aerified at 2x2-inch spacing twice in the spring and rolled and lightly verticut as often as possible. He uses 12 ounces of Primo per acre weekly in season. Chronic dry hot spots on the course



Accessible approach to the par 5, 540 yard, 4th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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It takes people to make all this happen and Sunderman has two assistants who help him oversee the daily operation and also serve as the spray and irrigation technicians. Fernando Collazo has been at Isla Del Sol for 24 years and Chris Hewitt for 14 years. Equipment Manager Larry Jones has six years service.

Sunderman, originally from New London, Ohio is a proud Buckeye Turfgrass Science graduate and has been in the business for 14 years. He has managed courses in Ohio and South Carolina before settling into the Florida west coast region with service at East Lake Woodlands, TPC at Prestancia before coming to Isla Del Sol.

A devoted family man, Sunderman left the turf business for a brief time ten years ago to take a position with Edward Jones Investments that offered a higher salary, which was needed to provide for his growing family at the time. Cold-call sales pitches were not personally very satisfying, but he did learn a lot more about working effectively with people, and he brought that business sense with him when he came back to golf course management less than a year later.

Through it all, his wife Melani was his anchor and biggest cheerleader. They met when Kevin was the assistant superintendent and she was the catering director at the Snee Farm Country Club in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. Family time is Sunderman's greatest passion, so his golf game is sketchy at best.

In his "family time" Sunderman is a self-confessed outdoor cooking aficionado. In less than a year of doing recent cover stories, Sunderman is the second "Grill Monster" I've come across. The first was Ricky Reeves at the Miami Beach GC. Reeves confessed to owning five grills and Sunderman makes all his own

SUNDERMAN FUN FACTS

Vehicle: 2008 Honda Ridgeline

The last good movie I saw: Skyfall

I stay home to watch: Ohio State Football

What I've been reading: The Big Miss by Hank Haney

Favorite meal: Anything I cook on the grill or in the smoker

Prized possessions: My wedding band. I've never taken it off

Personal heroes: My wife, father and mother

I'm better than anyone else when it comes to: Grilling (*except maybe for Ricky Reeves*)

Nobody knows that I: Was my high school valedictorian.

If I could do it over: I would never lose my temper (*ever*). It doesn't happen often

My fantasy is: To work because I want to, not because I have to. (*I'd still be doing the same thing.*)

The one thing I can't stand: People without direction or drive. Figure out what you need or want to do and get it done.

Most humbling experience: My first spring overseeding transition of greens as a superintendent.

The words that best describe me: Sincere, determined.

My dream foursome would be: My dad and two brothers.

My most amazing/lucky/important golf shot: My first hole-in-one. I was playing alone and had to shout at the group on the next tee to be witnesses and go look in the cup before I got to the green.



The early heron gets the fish! Photo by Joel Jackson.

sauces, rubs and seasonings. No Kraft or Sweet Baby Ray's touches his grill.

I think we need to have a cook-off between these two at one of our state events.

After dinner, you might find Sunderman picking up a guitar and playing a little blues or classic rock. He says his equipment manager's son is a professional musician and his own 13-year old son, Trent, isn't too shabby either. Sunderman admitted, "I like to perform in front of people. I'm not great but I love the rush. Sometimes I think Trent and I could practice a little more and maybe do some father-son outdoor patio gigs at a restaurant."

A generational leadership transition is taking place across our industry and our associations. It will be Sunderman's talents as a leader

in that generation that will be needed to help the FGCSA serve its members and remain a meaningful voice in the Florida golf industry.



View down the 1st hole from the putting green and tee complex. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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ISLA DEL SOL YACHT & COUNTRY CLUB



Isla Del Sol Maintenance Staff. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Location: St. Petersburg, FL

No. of Holes: 18 Yardage: 6,307
Par: 71 Slope & Rating: 130/69.1

Ownership: Member owned.

Playing Policy: Private. Some limited public play in the summer.

Designed by: Mark Mahannah.

Opened: 1997

Management Team: Club Manager Robert Rankin; Head Golf Professional Fred Curtis; Director of Grounds Kevin Sunderman

Projects: Converted greens from TifDwarf to SeaIsle Supreme Paspalum in 2007. We conduct progressive annual renovations of tees, bunkers and bulkheads and landscaped areas. In 2009 we did a total upgrade to all clubhouse landscaping.

Total property acres: 105. Acreage under maintenance: 100

Greens: Turf Type: SeaIsle Supreme.

Average size (sq.ft.): 6,200. Acres: 3.0

Height of Cut (Bench setting - .070 to .115 with goal in the field of .100 - .115.

Overseeding: none. Green speed goals:

Average 9.5 depending on season or event.

Tees: Turf Type: Celebration bermudagrass some 419 and SeaIsle Supreme. Acres: 2.0. HOC: .375 - .500" in season, .500 in summer. Overseeding (type & rate): Perennial ryegrass @ 400# per acre.

Fairways: Turf Type: Tifway 419. Total acres: 20. HOC: .500 - .600"

Overseeding: None

Roughs: Turf Type: Tifway 419 Total acres: 50. HOC: 1.25".

Overseeding: None

Bunkers: Number of bunkers 54. Sand type: 37M Machine raked; Equipment: John Deere 1200H

Landscaped and naturalized areas/beds: One naturalized area right side of first hole due to constant shade and cart traffic from teeing area. Multiple accent and functional landscaped beds.

Waterways/Lakes/Ponds: Total number: 23. Acres: 20. Lake maintenance by Lake Masters.

Irrigation: 100 percent direct piped effluent water. Two 75 hp VFD booster pumps by Citrus Seven Pump Services. Controls: Rainbird PAR 24 retrofitted to a

Nimbus II central controller. Heads: 1,100/75-ft. spacing. No fertigation system.

Water Restrictions: No restrictions by ordinance. Submit water-use BMP plans during times of low supply. We share the irrigation water with all the condominium associations. Due to shared water we can only irrigate wall-to-wall on Tuesday and Fridays. Other five days limited to about 150,000 gallons.

Water Management/Conservation practices: Numerous detailed "Hot Spot" programs. Utilize hand watering. Use wetting agents.

Staff: Total including superintendent: 16. Schedule: 36 hours straight time. Weekend crews gets 42 hours. Additional payroll for summer months used for either temporary workers, overtime or additional employees.

Key Staff: Assistant Fernando Collazo, 24 years with IDYCC; Assistant Chris Hewitt, 14 years at IDYCC; Equipment Technician Larry Jordan (6 years).

Meetings/ Communications: Daily assistant meetings. Monthly or special Club Department Head meetings.

Top: Early morning on the 10th hole at Isla Del Sol. Photo by Joel Jackson



The normally stately Great Blue Heron is all fluffed up by the windy day.

Waterways plus fish equals ospreys.



Feathered Friends on the Fairways

Photos by Joel Jackson

The Bird of Paradise plant behind the crotons looks like tall heron in the bushes.



Cormorants hunker down in the chilly October breeze.



This Great Blue let me get really close.



Roseate Spoonbills like the Tampa Bay area.

