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President*

The Florida Green

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ON THE COVER: 15th hole. Camp Creek G.C., WaterSound, FL. Photo by Joel Jackson

Realistic Optimism

Another year has passed and it's a good year to have behind us. The economists predicted that the economy would pick up in 2010. It did pick up, just not at the pace we hoped for. I'm beginning to look at the economy forecast like a typical Florida summer day, it might rain, might not. In 2011 the economy might improve, might not. Golf rounds and revenues might pick up, might not. However, I am more optimistic than pessimistic and believe that the economy and golf revenues will improve in 2011.

Over the past couple of years, we have been asked to do more with less. With revenues down, maintenance cost reductions have been the target. We cut labor hours, expenses and prolonged equipment life. For certain, when we were asked or told to make those cuts, we were not told that we could also lower playing conditions expectations. Golfers that are paying the rates we are charging expect quality conditions and it's our responsibility to provide them. Even if golfers did not expect them, our pride would not let conditions slip. Here are some suggestions for dealing with cost cutting.

Have an open mind and look at the big picture. With revenues down, clubs must reduce expenses in order to remain profitable. Look at your operation and determine where you can save and don't be inflexible.

Communicate. Make sure you communicate with everyone on what you are doing. Let your leaders know about reductions and what the ramifications will be. Communicate with your staff to let them know why you are making particular decisions. Communicate with the other departments. Make sure your finance team knows your cost cutting measures. This includes detailing short term or long term sustaining reductions. You may decide to skip a fertilizer application, an aeration, and a topdressing application. These would be examples of short term reductions, but are not sustainable over the long term. You need to explain why. Remember, the

people asking for cost reductions may not understand the effects of skipping maintenance practices

Be pro-active. It is better for you to look for and implement cost cutting measures than to be told what to cut. At staff meetings you hear what is going on within your club. If revenues are down, it is obviously time to look at reducing cost. While speaking with a group of Club Managers recently, I was asked if it was better for the General Manager to tell the Superintendent what to cut or give them a number or percentage to cut. I obviously told them that it is better to give the Superintendent the flexibility to determine where they can reduce cost. By being pro-active, you control your reductions rather than being told what to reduce.

Remind. You may be wondering why I stuck this word in there. It also pertains to communication but, I put it in its own category. You will need to remind your leaders that you are making cost reductions and doing more with less and when the economy picks up and revenues increase, you need those dollars back into your operating budgets. Don't let them forget that you made those reductions for the short term. In order to maintain quality conditions going forward, you'll need to restore many of those reductions. I also pointed this out to that group of Club Managers at their summit meeting.

I hope all of you had a Safe and Happy Holiday Season and here is to 2011 being a prosperous and profitable year for all of us.



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From left: Joel Jackson and Jennifer Innes received the PBGCSA's generous \$10,000 research donation from Steve Pearson, CGCS and Chapter President Larry Balko.

2010 Ends on a Generous Note

Florida GCSA chapters got into the holiday spirit early in the fall of 2010 when the Everglades GCSA made \$5000 donations to the GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf and to the FGCSA Research Account.

The Palm Beach GCSA followed suit in October at the Joint Palm Beach/Treasure Coast meeting at the Loxahatchee Club by presenting a \$10,000 research check to the Florida GCSA. The Palm Beach chapter also donated \$5000 to The First Tee of the Palm Beaches junior golf program at the same event.

The Treasure Coast GCSA made the fall semester a little brighter for two local students pursuing careers in golf course management by awarding them scholarships. The two \$1000 grants went to Dustin Naumann, a student at Penn State University who worked at the Grand Harbor CC, and to Jake Connolly, a student at Lake City Community College who worked at the Monarch CC and Harbour Ridge Y& CC.

Steve Pearson, CGCS of the Palm Beach Golf Course Superintendents Association presented a \$5,000 check to Craig Watson, Executive Director of the First Team Program of the Palm Beaches to help with the development of young golfers and good citizens.

Photo by Joel Jackson.





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The Treasure Coast Golf Course Superintendents Association presented \$1,000 scholarships to two students from the area majoring in golf course management. Pictured are Scholarship Chairman Chris Gast, Jake Connolly attending Florida Gateway College (Lake City), Dustin Naumann attending Penn State University, and Treasure Coast President Tim Cann.

And last but not least, Tim Hiers, CGCS and Greg Pheneger, CGCS teamed up also at the Palm Beach/Treasure Coast meeting to present Shelly Foy of the USGA Green Section Florida Region with plaques for her years of service on the Audubon International Board of Directors and the FGCSA's 2010 Marie Roberts Award for Lifetime Service to the Florida GCSA. Shelly

was unable to attend the original awards ceremony back in May, and we wanted to acknowledge her contributions in a public forum. Many chapters hosted Christmas outings and events in December which was too late to make this issue, but we'll be looking forward to spreading the joy they shared with others in the next issue.

Happy New Year, everyone.



2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

- FEB 7-12** GCSAA Golf Industry Show (GIS), Orlando
- FEB 10** FGCSA GIS Reception, Disney's EPCOT Center

MARCH

- MAR 7** Ridge Invitational, Eaglebrooke GC
- MAR 14** NFGCSA Florida Research Tournament, Pablo Creek GC
- MAR 15** FTGA Regional Seminar, Orlando
- Mar 16** FTGA Regional Seminar, Vero Beach
- Mar 21** Suncoast Scramble, Laurel Oak CC
- Mar 24** South Florida Turf Expo, UF/IFAS REC

APRIL

- APRIL 11** North Florida, Memorial ~~ZZZ~~Tournament, Marsh Creek G.C.
- April 18** Seven Rivers Jeff Hayden Envirotron Classic, World Woods
- April 21** Everglades Spring Symposium, Naples

MAY

- MAY 12** FGCSA Spring Board Meeting & Past Presidents Dinner, Naples
- May 13** FGCSA/USGA Seminar, Naples
- May 13-14** EGCSA GC Horn & Poa Annua Classic, Naples Beach Hotel

Shelly Foy (center) received service recognition awards from Tim Hiers, CGCS (left) representing Audubon International and Greg Pheneger, CGCS representing the Florida GCSA at the October joint meeting of the PBGCSA and TCGCSA in Jupiter. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Without the generous support from our sponsors, this event would not have been possible. We look forward to seeing you next year for what promises to be an even better event. Thanks to everyone who participated – especially to those who volunteered their time and energy to help make this event happen: Mike Carver, Billy Browning (Harrell's), Tom Morrow (DST), TJ Swafford (Hendrix & Dail), Jaimi Clark (DST), and Jason Nugent (Bethel Farms).

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Camp Creek Golf Club:

Part of Florida's Northwest Passage

BY Joel Jackson

A maze of bunkers guards the 13th green. Photo by Joel Jackson.

As the title indicates, this issue of *The Florida Green* ventures into Florida's great Northwest Territory, affectionately known as the Panhandle. When the Tallahassee-based Coastal Plains GCSA dissolved, we added our At-Large FGCSA members as a group to represent this region in the state in our cover story rotation.

In September, I packed up our new digital camera, tripod and digital recorder and headed to WaterSound, near Panama City Beach, to visit with Larry Livingston, CGCS and tour the three area golf courses under his supervision: Camp Creek, Shark's Tooth and The Origins. These courses and a coastal

development called Water Color are all owned by the St. Joe Company. Once a giant in the paper industry, the St. Joe Company has also become a major land developer. Their approach to responsible development is a key part this story.

Florida's coastline has several nicknames depending on the region. Down the east coast and up the west coast most of us are familiar with The First Coast, The Space Coast, The Treasure Coast, The Gold Coast, the Keys and the Ten Thousand Islands, The Platinum Coast and The Suncoast. Once you get north of Tampa, The Nature Coast, The Forgotten Coast and The Emerald Coast are perhaps less widely known.

Once you get to the Emerald Coast, roughly from Panama City to Pensacola, we find the Gulf Coast GCSA, which is home to many of our northwest Florida superintendents and most of our At-Large FGCSA members. The Gulf Coast members have a thriving chapter affiliated with the GCSAA, but geography makes interaction with the rest of the FGCSA quite a challenge.

However, as Florida superintendents they know they have a stake in the state-wide issues we all face and as such made a donation of \$2,500 for the Florida Turf Industry Economic Impact Study which will be released soon. So we bid welcome to our FGCSA At-Large members in

northwest Florida and in the Gulf Coast Chapter to the pages of the Florida Green.

One such dual-member is Larry Livingston, CGCS who is no stranger to many of us down the Peninsula from his many years in the Tampa-Sarasota area. Livingston made his move to the Panama City Beach area ten years ago to become the superintendent of the Tom Fazio designed Camp Creek Golf Club. In 2006 and 2007 he also assumed oversight of the Origins and Shark's Tooth courses located just a few minutes' drive north and east from his office at Camp Creek.

"St. Joe recognized their strength was

in developing, not operating, projects including golf courses, hotels, marinas and even upscale camping areas," Livingston said. "So, they brought in Troon Management to operate the golf courses. They liked Troon's track record with high-end properties and felt it would be a good fit."

The Emerald Coast is similar to other coastal areas in Florida in that everyone loves the beach and that's where you logically find the most development, but you don't have to stray too far inland to be surrounded by the woodlands of the Point Washington State Forest. It is in that environment we find the Troon Trio of golf courses.

"St. Joe leaves as much native mate-

rial as possible whenever they develop a property," Livingston said. "You will see very mature trees and native vegetation up close to most all of the buildings and structures. It's almost like they dropped them into the landscape by helicopter. In all the condo or apartment sites, there are always large green spaces or 'commons' areas for people to enjoy and the kids to play."

The golf courses are surrounded by these woodlands and you see very little evidence of the residential areas, which makes for a truly enjoyable outdoor experience. In addition, the Shark's Tooth layout borders Lake Powell, a unique body of water known as a coastal

CAMP CREEK GOLF CLUB

Location:

WaterSound, Fla.

Ownership:

St. Joe Company, managed by Troon Golf; private 18 holes, championship tees 7159 yards, par 72, Slope/Rating 152/76, Avg. rounds 21,000/year.

Designed by: Tom Fazio, constructed by MacCurrach Golf Construction and opened in 2001.

Management Team:

Club Manager Mike Jansen, Head Golf

Professional Jaxon Hardy, Golf Course Superintendent Larry Livingston

Major projects: 2006 bunker renovation – added SandDam liners and new sand.

Acres under maintenance: 145.6; total property: 1023.3

Greens: 3.45 acres TifEagl; avg size 7485 sq. ft.; HOC 0.110 - 0.125 in.; no overseeding. Green speed goals 10 - 11.5.

Tees: 4.5 acres. Tifway 419. HOC 0.45 in. Overseeded with Paragon



Camp Creek Maintenance Staff

ryegrass at 15 lbs/1000 sq. ft.

Fairways and Roughs: Fwys 40 acres, Roughs 37 acres; Tifway 419 bermudagrass; HOC 0.45 in. on fwys and 1.5 in/ on roughs. Fwys overseeded with TMI Paragon Ryegrass @ 500 lbs/acre. **Non-turf areas:** 65 bunkers – sand type: Red Bay sub-angular from the Lamar Pit, hand raked. 12 large, native sand, waste areas raked with a Toro Sand Pro. 8 lakes total 40.15 acres. Maintained in-house.

Irrigation: Effluent with ground

water back-up. Flowtronex VFD pump station @ 2,250 gpm. Three -75 hp turbine pumps. Toro Site Pro E-Osmac controls. 1,333 heads with part-circle heads along perimeters. Fertilization: 85 gpm double-headed pump with two 2,500-gal. holding tanks with concrete containment. Two back-up groundwater well, one 6-in.

and one 2-in. 2-million-gallon irrigation reservoir.

Water Conservation: ET-based irrigation programming adjusted by field observations.

Total Staff: 21. (18 full time and three part time at 40 hrs/week). Key staff: Josh Parker, first assistant; Clay Morgan, second assistant/irrigation tech; Tim Greggo and Greg Snow, equipment techs; Dave Conway, pest control; James Yeakel, admin assistant for all three courses.

dune lake. This stretch of Florida coastline has the largest number of coastal dune lakes in the US, Livingston noted. Using the Florida Atlas; I counted nearly 20 from Destin to Panama City. The lakes are really coastal estuaries that become sealed off from the Gulf by the shifting beach sand bars. Every so often large storms breach the barriers and the “lake” water and the salt water mix.

This part of the state also defies the norms we associate with golf in Florida. As the Peninsula bustles with winter golf activity, up here this is the slower season. They make hay in the spring and summer, but visitors begin dwindling in the fall as the cold fronts march through with much more regularity than in the southern regions. It also takes some getting used to seeing the sun set along the surf line instead of smack-dad over the middle of the Gulf.

This “reverse season” reality requires that Livingston get creative in performing the necessary annual maintenance programs like aerifying during their



View from the forward tee on the par-3, 12th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson

busy warm season. Livingston explained a concept he has devised to minimize disruption to play.

“I began experimenting with using smaller quadra-tines on a more frequent

basis to remove organic matter build-up and yet minimize disruption and recovery time to the putting surfaces. While southern courses may use large tines two or three times during late spring and

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summer, we go maybe five or six times with the smaller tines. We still have to aerify during the warm season to get turf recovery, but by using the smaller-diameter tines we don't have to top dress as heavy— or at all — because we are already on a regular light dusting program.”

“Sometimes we can get a closed day to do the job, or we may have to do nine holes a day back to back. The greens are puttable the next day versus the 10-14 days needed for full recovery of a large-tine plugging. Our regular golfers might finish their round and say, ‘I see you did the small holes again!’ We always tell them we aerified and we give them a money-back option if they feel the course wasn't up to expectations. We get very few complaints using this method.

“During the growing season we verticut weekly, apply 5 ounces of Primo™ weekly, topdress every one or two weeks, and roll greens every two weeks except when turf growth slows down. I feel rolling can be too aggressive sometimes and cause stress.”

Getting back to the responsible development theme, all three courses are certified in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. The design of the golf courses features abundant wildlife habitat and corridors. On the Origins course, Livingston showed me a bridge that St. Joe had installed, replacing an old roadbed that had cut across a wetland, to restore the natural wildlife corridor and flow of seasonally high water levels.

Livingston has been conducting school tours on the courses for several years as part of the ACSP Outreach and Education section of the certification process.

“We work closely with the Seaside Neighborhood School, a nearby charter,” Livingston said, “showing the students how golf course maintenance relates to overall environmental management. Some of their on-course activities have included wildlife counts, water sampling and native area plantings.”

The 15th hole at Shark's Tooth borders Lake Powell, a coastal dune lake. Photo by Joel Jackson

