Klimm takes Ridge Club through storms—literally

Things are finally coming around for Mark Klimm, both maintenance-wise and equipment-wise. Having been around golf courses since he was 14 and worked summer jobs at Hyannisport Golf Course, Klimm has taken his accumulated knowledge to The Ridge Club, a new 18-hole championship golf course on upper Cape Cod, Mass.

He is superintendent at the 6,641-yard, par 71 course, which has been nominated as one of the country’s top new courses by Golf Digest magazine.

Although the Robert von Hagge-designed The Ridge Club course opened July 4, 1990, the previous owners got into financial difficulties.

Last spring, the course was bought by Cape Cod Golf Properties, Inc., which owns the adjoining Holly Ridge public golf course.

Klimm, the superintendent at Ballymeade Country Club in Falmouth, Mass., for three years, came on board in April, along with the new owners.

With a 15-man staff, he immediately began an intensive program to prepare the course for the season, including filling out his line of turf maintenance equipment. The previous owners had acquired some equipment, but not enough to properly or efficiently maintain the course.

Klimm’s efforts were almost derailed by Hurricane Bob, which roared through the Cape in mid-August. The course lost approximately 500 trees, but fortunately got little rain and no flooding. The pines and oak trees that surround the course showed considerable “salt burn” from the hurricane-force winds coming in off the Atlantic Ocean. The turf had some browning in spots, but it lasted only a few days.

“We were able to get the back nine holes open two days after Bob went through,” Klimm said. His crews had downed branches and tree limbs cleared so off the full course was playable by the weekend.

Klimm’s goal is maintaining the course at a championship level. So, when he started searching the market for the equipment he needed, he spent a lot of time last spring looking and watching equipment at work. He ended up with a “package” of equipment, and now advocates that approach for superintendents.

“I talked with golf course superintendents in New York and New Jersey who were very pleased with their Ransomes equipment, so I began checking it out. Their local representative was extremely cooperative in demonstrating their equipment for us. In fact, both the dealer and the district sales manager spent a lot of time working with us, helping figure out the best combination of machines for our needs,” he said.

“They brought in several pieces of equipment and we tried them all,” Klimm and his staff tested a number of equipment combinations before finally deciding on the package that would best fit their turf maintenance programs.

Klimm said one advantage to buying most of a course’s equipment from the same manufacturer is ease of service. “It simplifies our own parts inventory. And, it makes it easier for our mechanic to get familiar with one primary brand.

“We get to know the dealer better, so we can count on him for prompt service,” We’ve needed parts a couple times and he had them shipped in overnight from the factory.”

The Ridge Course greens, tees and fairways are all bentgrass, with a bluegrass-lesser species in the roughs. Some native grasses were left in the roughs, to reduce the amount of maintenance time required.

Surprisingly, the base soil is a heavy clay. “Soils are more sandy closer to the shore, but we’re far enough inland that the course sits on a vein of clay that runs through the middle of the Cape,” Klimm said.

“They moved a lot of clay when the course was built. Clay was used to build up the many mounds and mounds and berms on the course, as well as for the roadbeds.”

Cape sand, washed and screened, was hauled in for the greens and traps. The greens were constructed to United States Golf Association standards.

Greens are mowed daily, to 5/32-inch height. During the busy summer season, greens are mowed with walking mowers. Spring and fall, Klimm’s crews cut greens with their triplex mowers.

Four years later, he was back on the Cape at New Seabury CC, this time as superintendent. In 1988 he joined Ballymeade while it was under construction.

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