MAINTENANCE

TPC at Sawgrass wins players’ vote

By Vern Putney

Christmas came a few hours early for Fred Klauk, superintendent at Sawgrass TPC Stadium Course in Ponte Vedra, Fla., an appre­hensive stop on the PGA Tour late last March. Tour pros, extremely critical in 1990 of the layout’s somewhat ragged appearance, in December voted it the best conditioned re­sort course on the 1991 tour schedule.

News of this turnaround, relayed to Klauk at a TPC Christmas party at nearby Marsh Landing Country Club, was cause for further celebration, and stamped Klauk, his staff and TPC as the comeback story of the year.

First to learn of the glad tidings were Klauk’s wife, Peggy, and PGA Commissioner Deane Beman, an annual holiday attendee. Beman shared Klauk’s elation. He had huddled with Klauk to discuss redemption and regained reputation soon after that bleak 1990 period when Sawgrass was torn apart verbally by the players and played in the press.

Hard as it was not to share such good news, Klauk held off announcement until Sawgrass’ “family” gathering the next day.

The balloting by mail and phone was dra­matic. With five minutes to deadline in the voting, Larry Mize had moved Callaway Gardens Country Club of Pine Mountain, Ga., into a tie.

Then came a call from Wayne Levi of New­hartford, N.Y., 1990 PGA Tour Player of the Year. “Sawgrass,” he said emphatically. “It was in perfect shape, from tees through fair­ways through greens.

“The practice area was immaculate, the practice tees better than many tour fairways,” Levi said.


Other courses favored were Harbour­Town Golf Links in Hilton Head Island, S.C., Kingsmill Golf Club, Williamsburg, Va.; Toms­hore Resort, Tarpon Springs, Fla.; and TPC at Star Pass, Tucson, Ariz.

Klauk and his crew of 52 forged perhaps the biggest turnaround in tour history.

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Squaw Creek living under no-chem rules

By Doug Saunders

The first hints of winter have hit the High Sierra, for Carl Rygg, head superintendent of the Resort at Squaw Creek, the time has come to put his game plan into motion.

The challenge for Rygg is unique in golf course maintenance. He must develop a sys­tematic plan to protect the grasses of this new course from the ravages of the difficult winter weather at this mountain setting. His task is even more difficult because he must develop a system that won’t have the normal tools at a superintendent’s disposal—fungicides and herbicides.

The Resort at Squaw Creek is a Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed course that opened last September in Olympic Valley, Calif. Located at 6,200 feet at the base of Squaw Valley USA, the site of the 1960 Winter Olympics, the 18-hole layout winds up onto tree-lined mountainsides and flows out onto an Alpine meadow that contains many acres of fragile wetlands.

The valley receives an average of 300 inches of snow a year and from September until early June can see everything from monsoon rains to the heaviest snowstorms imaginable.

In securing permits to build the course, the developers, Perini Land and Development, went through countless hearings over seven years.

Permits needed to be secured from two local boards, one regional board, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The persistent concern at every stage was the effect of any runoff of nutrients and pesticides into the creek that flowed through the proposed course site.

The Sierra Club filed suit over the validity of the Cape Cod Study findings as they per­tained to a mountain environment, and ob­tained the stipulation that a complete simu­lation for that study be performed on the site. The developers had this done over three years at a cost of $500,000.

After 27 plan changes and numerous hear­ings, final approval was obtained in 1988. But the restrictions imposed made the Resort at Squaw Creek an immense maintenance chal­lenge.

“The final approvals by the planning com­mission set up a Chemical Application Man­agement Plan (CHAMP) that explicitly con­trols all phases of golf course maintenance,” Rygg said. “Their intention was to put specific controls upon the course that would protect the creek and not adversely affect the natural aquifer of the meadow.”

But in its hopes to be thorough, the board obtained input from one source on what it would take to maintain a course with mini­mum chemical use in a mountain environ­ment. The suggestions of this one source became the rules for the Resort at Squaw Creek.

Every phase of maintenance, from types of fertilizers to the weekly water used, has been spelled out and must be adhered to at all times. This makes for a very restrictive pro­gram under which Rygg must work. The use of herbicides is limited to only Roundup, but this nonspecific herbicide is virtually useless in developing a championship quality golf course, Rygg said.

“The CHAMP program — which is 12 volumes in length and contains five chapters of specific stipulations — also allows me to use MCP2,4,5-D but only after I have tried every feasible method of weed eradication I can,” Rygg said.

“I plan to use a large labor force to hand-pick weeds, but if I have a force of 52 workers and a weed problem continues, I must hire more workers in an attempt to eradicate it. The cost of such programs is not of concern, as is pointed out in the CHAMP.

“I only do play Callaway’s weed problem becomes bad enough to affect the interest of the paying customer to play, and it can be shown that severe economic hardship to the golf course operators has occurred, and I have done everything possible manually, that I could go back to the review board to obtain permission to use Weed Be Gone.”

The CHAMP also names specific brands of products that may be used for fertilizers, herbicides and fungicides. This takes away the option of shopping for the most economical product, again making normal mainte­