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 turnout, 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 New Hartford, 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."

Klauk called Callaway Gardens because of Ryder Cup conflict.

Early poll results showed well-scattered course support, but it finally came down to a two-course race.

Doral Country Club, in Miami; TPC of Scottsdale in Phoenix, Ariz.; TPC at Las Colinas in Irving, Texas; and TPC at The Woodlands in Woodlands, Tex., shared third place in the voting.

Other courses favored were Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head Island, S.C., Kingsmill Golf Club, Williamsburg, Va.; Toms Brook 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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USGA thrilled with Pebble Beach

By Frank Pollard

The association have nearly all been
quirements of the United States Golf
public and tournament play had
relate to public access to the course,
Pebble Beach Co. has brought the
is very nearly unplayable since the
tion of Kikuyugrass in fairways,
had generally suffered from neglect
in many cases. The course, in fact,
had suffered from years of neglect
and landing areas of the fairways
and façade unplayable as

A thorough renovation of all
greens including reclaiming putting
surfaces lost over the years to
corrupted growth on their perim-
ceter, tees and bunkers has
restored them to meet the original
1919 design of architects Jack
Neville and Douglas Grant. The
truest form of this course has
been entirely reconstructed to
USGA specifications. A unique
healing system was installed
in the heavily shaded 5th green
to maintain soil temperature and
assure good grass growth during
the cold winter months.

After a recent USGA inspection,
the team of USGA President C.
Grant Spaeth; former USGA Presi-
dent Frank “Sandy” Tatum, who
had assisted Neville in making mi-
cor changes prior to the
1972 Open; Tom Meeks, USGA
Director of rules and competitions;
Tim Moraghan, USGA champios-
ship course agronomist; and Ron
Reed, USGA manager of regional
affairs, was enthusiastic about the
progress.

“Our recent walk-through (Oc-
tober) was to assess the current
condition of the course and the
progress that has been made, and
to establish long-term parameters
such as fairy widths; cutting
heights of the fairways, primary
roughs and intermediate roughs;
condition and consistency of the
greens; and other course prepara-
tion guidelines for the 1992 Open,”
said Spaeth. “We are right on
schedule and actually, the course
looks to be in absolutely wonderful
condition.

“The cooperation of the Pebble
Beach people — company Presi-
dent Tom Oliver, Vice President
of Golf Paul Spangler (also U.S. Open
general chairman), Ed Miller and
Rand Hines and their staffs has
been marvelous and they have done
a superb job. All we really have to
do from here on in is fine-tune it.”

The USGA team, in complete
agreement with Spaeth, also
commented on the course’s superior
condition and the confi-
dence the USGA has in the Pebble
Beach staff and its accomplish-
ments in bringing the course back
into such magnificent shape.

Miller has nothing but praise for
the enormous amount of work as
well as the caliber of the work
accomplished by his Pebble Beach
grounds-keeping staff and U.S.
Open project crew in a relatively
short time.

“We’ve made tremendous
progress this past year and the
credit belongs entirely to the
dedication of our exceptionally
fine crew of people working out on
the course,” Miller said. “Most people
thought the eradication of the
Kikuyugrass alone was an insur-
mountable task.

That, coupled with our total
course restoration program, plus
meeting the requirements of U.S.
Open condition dating, made
our work even more difficult. Yet,
our crews managed to complete
their demanding assignments and
objectives very successfully, with
minimal interruption or distur-
bance of daily play.

“Restoration is very nearly com-
plete,” said Miller, “with only
minor tasks to be wrapped up.
The fine-tuning of the course for
the Open will, however, continue
over the next few months and we have
every reason to expect that it will be
in the best shape it’s ever been by
the time the Open rolls around.

The public, AT&T-Pebble Beach
National Pro-Am touring pros and
1992 U.S. Open field will now see
the course as the original classic
design dictated and players of
the past saw it and played it.

Pebble Beach’s 14th hole is typical of the condition of the course today, with firm, dense
perennial ryegrass fairways; fast, consistent and true poa annua greens; and beautifully sculptured and playable bunkers set along the precipitous and
rugged cliffs of Carmel Bay bordering the Pacific.

Rygg’s chore at Squaw Creek is a no-chemical attack

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ance management practices ob-
solate.

This challenge intrigued Rygg
from the outset. Rygg is familiar
with working under restrictive con-
tions. His previous work place
was The Links at Spanish bay in
Monterey, Calif. This Robert Trent
Jones Jr. course was constructed on the site of an abandoned sand pit
just north of Pebble Beach.

Rygg’s challenge was both
reclamation of the dunes destroyed
by the mining operations and the
protection of the existing fragile
dune environment. Many controls
were imposed by the California
Coastal Commission, but they paled
in the face of the specific impose-
d at the Resort at Squaw Creek.

“My job is to develop a plan to
grow the healthiest stand of turf
possible,” Rygg said. “My plan is to
create the best possible situation,
throughout the year, and then
work to achieve a sustainable
soil balance, to manage the
necessary elements and nutrients
available to the turf plant. By devel-
oping healthy turf, I can help it fight
diseases and other pest infesta-
tions.

I am not anti-chemical at all. In
fact, I know they are very advanta-
geous and cost-effective for controls on specific problems,” Rygg ex-
plained. “But we must work within the framework of our project plan
that governs this course.”

The typical plan at the mountain
courses in the High Sierra calls for
use of fungicides on greens through
the winter months to prevent snow
mold that develops under the snow-
pack as the soil warms up.

The Resort at Squaw Creek is
limited to only the use of one fungic-
cide, Chloroneb, and this product is
not available in California as it does
not meet the state label require-
ments for use. In an attempt to locate
Chloroneb, Rygg found only enough
available to treat half of the greens
for one winter.

He covered all greens with course
covers and will begin to hand
clear the greens in March as the soils
begin to warm up to a temperature
that will allow the growth of molds.

“There will be a high labor cost
for all of these programs,” Rygg said.
“We could see anywhere from
two to six feet of snow on portions of
the golf course as March is a high
snow month historically.

As spring melts the grass,
we wait for new turf to grow in,” he
said.

Through the summer months,
the course will become a living
laboratory as Rygg works on new
ideas to use modern-day products
that will work in a restrictive main-
tenance program.

He plans to use wetting agents to
help with areas of hydrophobic soils.
He will use biostimulants to help
develop good balance in the soils.
And he will use one of the most
lab-intensive programs imaginable.

The course is restricted to only
80 acres of fertilized and cultivated
turf, but Rygg will begin with a staff
of 25 workers. Many of them will
begin work in March and be busy
through November, even though
the course itself won’t open for
players until mid-May.

The course went through its first
winter last year and the double
whammy of warm weather through
January and February, followed by
more than nine feet of snow in
March, produced perfect conditions
for severe damage from molds.

Rygg was happy with how the
young grass pulled through this
first shock and learned much about
the fickle Sierra weather. After a
brief warm-up in April, the golf
course was still receiving snow-
storms and cold temperatures in
May.

“We had some spot damage out
of that first thaw and we got a better
feeling of how the snowpack works.
This is going to help us in the future
in knowing what areas we need our
attention first.”

The Resort at Squaw Creek and
the work of Carl Rygg is already
drawing scrutiny by golf industry
officials as he begins to find ways
to maintain a course without pesti-
cides, herbicides and fungicides.

The techniques he develops
could pave the way for modern
maintenance techniques for the
next century. But Rygg keeps this
futuristic view in perspective.

“I really look at the program that I
am developing in Squaw Valley as
a step forward into the past to a
time when chemical use was less preva-
ent as it is today,” Rygg explained. “I
think there is much to be learned from
the old-fashioned methods to encour-
age healthy turf. And I know that
sound cultural practices and good old-
-fashioned hard hand labor can make
the difference.”