any champions have been made and broken on the gently rolling, generously bunkered holes at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., the site of this year's U.S. Open and site of 13 national championships since 1901. But few have performed better than Baltusrol's longtime superintendent, Joseph Flaherty Jr.

Flaherty began his association with Baltusrol as assistant superintendent in 1964, and he has never worked elsewhere. He comes by turf management naturally. His father, Joe Sr., was superintendent of Manasquan River Golf Club in Brielle, N.J., for 29 years and that is where Joe Jr. grew up.

"My dad tried to steer me away from turf management," said Flaherty, "but I like basically everything about it." The only real downside to turf management is the loss of family time, he said. "It's very hard to give up weekends and holidays when you have a young family.

He met his wife, Eileen, while on a ski trip to Switzerland. "I was looking for someone with American cigarettes and she had Kents," Flaherty said. They have four children — none of whom are pursuing careers in turf management, though Flaherty said he hasn't influenced them not to enter the field.

Flaherty is a graduate of Rutgers University in New Brunswick and is a certified golf course superintendent. He thought about earning a master's degree in business administration early in his career, but the two "courses" in his life didn't mesh. Things went fine the first semester, but during the second semester he missed the mid-terms because they were held in the middle of May and missed the final exams because they fell in June.

"It just didn't work with the [golf] course schedule, so that was the end of that," he said.


Preparation for the 1993 Open began upwards of three years ago when major construction projects got underway around the Lower Course, which has been the site of Opens since 1954. The club called on architect Rees Jones to make suggestions to update the course for the 1993 event.

Projects completed during the fall and winter of 1991-92 included several new tees and bunkers. Last fall, existing bunkers were reconstructed. Most of the major construction work was done by Pavlec Brothers Golf Course Construction Co., Flaherty said. Routine maintenance was the order through mid-May, he said. His staff of 50 and his two assistants worked around the club's regular member golf schedule through May 1, but golf was limited after May 1 as preparations began in earnest. Since then, no carts or guests have been allowed on the Lower Course and some tees are roped off.

The 1993 Open looks to top all others at Baltusrol. It is completely sold out — 30,000 tickets in all. In previous years, day passes were still available through the final rounds.

Attendance is not the only aspect of the tournament that is growing. In 1980 there were 19 hospitality tents. This year there will be 46. On the Upper Course, as many as 6,000 cars will be parked.

U.S. Open General Chairman and Baltusrol member Dick Miller said his club contacted others that had used their facilities, which is contracted out by the United States Golf Association, was well underway around the fringes of the Upper Course in mid-May. The hospitality tents measure 40 by 60 feet, have platform floors and are air-conditioned. Miller said. All are corporate-sponsored and strictly for corporate guests.

"Baltsusrol members take an active role in the tournament. As many as 860 serve as volunteers and 49 different committees handle various aspects of planning," Miller said.

The long hours of preparation are, perhaps the worst part of being superintendent at a U.S. Open host club, said Flaherty.

"You get up, eat, work, and go to bed. By the time the tournament starts, you and the whole staff are exhausted when you most need to be ready."

"It's very hard to give up weekends and holidays when you have a young family."

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"You get up, eat, work, and go to bed. By the time the tournament starts, you and the whole staff are exhausted when you most need to be ready."

— Joe Flaherty Jr.

**Buyer beware:**

**A mulch on the market can cause nitrogen starvation**

Golf course superintendents should beware of a mulch that can cause nitrogen starvation shock to annuals and shallow-rooted perennial plants growing in the immediate area.

Dr. Francis Gouin of the University of Maryland reported in the Free State Nursery News that the dangerous mulch originates in the pallet industry, which is solving its solid-waste problem by grinding its discarded pallets into mulch. The ground wood is sprayed with a colorant to make it look more acceptable.

Since lumber has a carbon/nitrogen ratio of between 700-to-one and 800-to-one, when this material is applied to the ground, it sucks all available nitrogen from the soil to a depth of about three inches.

Gouin said the only way to deal with this material is by composting. It is not possible to satisfy the nitrogen needs of both the microorganisms that do the decomposition of wood and the plants by applying additional nitrogen to the soil, he said.