

Maple Ridge renovation complete

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Extensive improvements over the past two years have transformed the semi-private Maple Ridge Golf Club into one of west-central Georgia's top layouts. Former Masters champion Larry Mize and architect Craig Schreiner teamed up to transform the already-formidable layout into a strategically

challenging but highly playable course.

Phase two improvements called for the complete removal of the 11th hole, a short downhill par 3, and adding a new par-3 16th hole. Phase Two improvements also included the remodeling of the former par-3 14th hole, the reshaping of five fairways, four new green complexes

and additional teeing complexes.

"Eliminating one hole allowed us to improve the back nine tremendously," said Schreiner. "Not only was the playability and strategy of the golf course enhanced, several new residential building lots with golf course frontage were created. Removing one mediocre golf hole really gave us an opportunity to enhance the golf course."

Mike McCollum, director of golf, was concerned about retaining the membership level during the renovation. As a result of the renovation, however, membership grew by over 50 members. Heartland Golf Construction of Little Rock, Ark., completed the work in the off-season to allow the golf course to remain open with minimal disruption to play. "Heartland was great to work with," McCollum

said. "The support and expertise they exhibited was beyond compare."

"With the completion of Phase Two and the initial response to the additional course improvements," he added, "we have reason to believe that membership at Maple Ridge Golf Club will be closed out before the end of 2000. This will allow us to become a private, restricted-access facility."

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Topdressing

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METHODS OF APPLICATION

It seems that most superintendents have adopted the light top-dressing program, with applications every 10 to 14 days.

The biggest change in the application method has been the use of hand-push rotary-type fertilizer spreaders. We use this method at the Country Club of the Rockies and have been very impressed with its advantages. This method works best with dried sand. The drying of the sand at plants is becoming more and more common, and some suppliers also bag it. This makes the operation very similar to fertilization.

Calibration is as simple as just eyeing the amount on a nursery green. I strongly suggest using the wheel-to-wheel method and applying in two directions to achieve uniform coverage.

Once the material has been applied some superintendents are simply syringing the material in and not brushing at all. This method works quite well.

At the Country Club of the Rockies we have adapted the Fly-Mo technique for working the sand into the turf canopy. Our method works as follows: cut the greens, apply the sand with Lesco spreaders in two directions, then a team of three with Fly-Mo's follows each other, going over the green in two directions. That evening we water heavily to help work the sand into the canopy.

This season we also tried a few top dressings using the same method, except with green-colored sand. The results were remarkable. Many of our members said they didn't even realize we had topdressed. You know that old saying, "Out of sight, out of mind."

This season we plan to use colored sand during our peak season for all top dressings. It adds to the cost, but the advantages offset the additional dollars.

Kevin J. Ross is director of golf course management at Country Club of the Rockies in Edwards, Colo., and president of Ross Agronomy in Eagle, Colo.