

## Great Southwest GC closes for regrassing

ARLINGTON, Tex. – Great Southwest Golf Club, in Grand Prairie, in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, will be closed for a several months to install new grasses expected to better withstand Texas weather, the *Arlington Morning News* reported. Plans call for installation of Tifway 419 bermudagrass on the fairways, officials said. The rye grass had

been dying out.

Members are upset and, at the same time, understanding. "I sympathize with the members. But this is a big commitment by the company to spend \$1 million and make this one of the best courses in Texas," said club pro and general manager Chip Graham.

Club members were notified

about the closure in a letter earlier this summer. It described how the management team was going to handle the conversion of the current bentgrass greens to a hybrid bermudagrass.

The change was deemed necessary because the humidity and rains had caused *pythium* to attack the greens.

Great Southwest members will be able to play other courses in the ownership group, including Diamond Oaks, Woodhaven, Oakridge, Eldorado, Los Rios and Thorntree.

"Bentgrass is a superb putting surface," club member Lou Duran said. "But they've had a lot of trouble with it [keeping it growing in the Texas heat]. The Champions or Tif Eagle is

a positive way to go. Great Southwest could be a Colonial-type course. It's that kind of layout. I'm looking at this as a positive."

Longtime member Mo Lambert said the club should have made the move a year earlier. "For me, I don't know if it's just getting older or what, but the summers keep getting hotter and dryer every year," he said.

## Southern Hills

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played at Southern Hills and they stepped up to the plate. What we want is not only for a course to be in top shape for the Open, but also that any work done will benefit the members 15 to 20 years down the road."

The USGA's course preparation memo covers a wide range of issues, from turfgrass conditions and the length of the rough to the placements of grandstands and wiring. There is little flexibility in the USGA's edicts, save for the speed of the greens.

"The course preparation memo is firm," said Moraghan. "We say this is how we want the course set up for the national championship. The only issue that is flexible is green speed. It's very difficult to set a prescribed number because you don't know until the week of the event what the weather conditions will be. I'll ask John what he thinks he can give us, and we'll settle on a number."

### PRE-TOURNAMENT PREP

Moraghan said the USGA was impressed with the facelift at Southern Hills.

"The golf course superintendent is the most underrated player in the whole picture," he said. "John was new to Southern Hills and had to get the course ready on short notice. Throw in the vandalism to the greens and losing his maintenance building and he had to do a remarkable job. It's going to be a great Open."

The summer weather in the Tulsa area is usually hot and dry, which demands that Southern Hills be extensively watered. The new irrigation system will be instrumental in keeping the course in top condition throughout the summer.

Prior to the Open and throughout the tournament, Szklinski will add part-time staff and will welcome volunteers to help with course maintenance.

"Once we get close to the Open there will be a very high sense of urgency and intensity," he said. "I'm sure I'll have some butterflies. But I feel what we've been through has been a pretty good preparation for what we need to be like during the tournament." ■

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