

Willow Run GC earns Audubon International certification

By JOEL JOYNER

PEWAUKEE, Wis. — The daily-fee Willow Run Golf Club here has become the sixth course in Wisconsin and 246th in the world to achieve designation as a certified member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP).

The low-budget facility required a team approach in accomplishing the certification.

"I have to share credit with my assistant Pat Wegmann and the course horticulturist Jason Dibb as well as the rest of my staff for their hard work and dedication to the program and the environment," said superintendent Jerry Kienast. "This definitely has been a team effort."

At Willow Run, which opened in 1975, the program worked to provide a more challenging layout for the players. "It's a very old design," Kienast said. "It has the push-up greens, not well-defined and very wide open. Adding prairie grasses and



The 10th hole at Willow Run

leaving watered areas alone rather than stripping them down made a significant difference.

"Instead of having a fairway dogleg where you could miss it by 50 yards, 60 yards or 70 yards and still have a play from the short rough, now you end up in a

two-foot high prairie grass," he said. "On the 10th hole, you could spank it anywhere and not have a difficult play at the green. Now, if you miss the fairway by even 10 yards, you're lucky to even find the ball."

The changes have been successful for both the environment and attracting a better grade of players.

"We use to be listed with *Golf Digest* as a two-star golf course, and shortly after completing the certification program we were listed as a three-star course. We've become a more challenging course primarily from defining our holes," said Kienast.

The 6,400-yard course signed on with the program back in 1997.

"To reach certification, a course must demonstrate that they are maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas," said Joellen Zeh, staff ecologist for the Cooperative Sanctuary System.

Thatch control

Continued from page 9

cutting these vertical grooves, then filling them with sand, they create channels that are much more efficient in keeping the surface open for oxygen exchange and water movement.

The healing time of verti-grooving also seems to be faster than core aeration. This does make sense when you consider a 0.125-inch groove that is healing from two directions, along with new plant material initiated from stolon stimulation.

LIKE A SKILL SAW CUTTING WOOD

One question I am frequently asked is, doesn't this verti-grooving severely disturb the green surface? My response, along with that of other superintendents I've talked with, is that it's not as disruptive as one might think. The main reason is that the densities of these new bends are allowing the surfaces to be held together so tight that the blades cut a cleaner groove without the edges being ripped or torn. It is very similar to a skill saw cutting a small groove along a section of wood.

I have personally used this machine in two directions on a section of our Penn A-4 practice green with great success and no surface damage. The thought of verticutting in two directions equating to a 25-percent thatch removal is certainly interesting, but may not be necessary when you address your thatch from the beginning.

Now that we have five years of solid experience growing these new "superbents," we are starting to answer these thatch concerns. The combination of astute fertilizer management with the old practice of true dethatching just might solve this problem. ■

Kevin J. Ross, CGCS, is director of golf course management at the Country Club of the Rockies, in Edwards, Colo.

High-tech mowers

Continued from page 9

allows superintendents to get out on the course and mow early in the morning without creating noise pollution."

Whurr looks toward other industries for advances that can be adapted for golf course equipment. "In the automotive industry, they're researching fuel cell technology," he said. "The amount of money being spent on it is absolutely incredible. If they feel there is a need to develop systems like that, then there's opportunity for us to look."

BREAKTHROUGHS IN GPS

Chuck Grief, manager of the golf and turf division at John Deere, says global positioning systems, guided by satellites, will drive some dramatic ad-

vances in mowers.

"In five to 10 years, we'll see autonomous mowing with GPS," he said. "We'll see, most likely, self-adjusting cutting units with GPS. Within five years, we'll see onboard GPS diagnostics."

What's the advantage for superintendents? "The superintendent, the mechanic or even the distributor who sells the unit will be able to tap in and receive a signal that says, 'Okay, what's the average oil pressure that this engine has been running in the last 24 hours?'" said Grief. "We'll be able to use GPS to take readings that will extend the life of the product."

GPS and its spinoff benefits will take course maintenance to a new level of efficiency, Grief said. "I can envision, at some point in time, there being a little white shed next to a putting green. At

nine o'clock at night a door will open up and a walk-behind mower, as we know them today, will go out and mow the greens so that a superintendent doesn't have to mow them first thing in the morning.

"Prior to that, however," Grief said, "as a manufacturer, we'll use GPS to help an operator mow a straight line. Essentially, an operator will be running the machine but not steering it."

As costs come down, the technology will become widespread, he predicted.

"One of the obstacles is to get the golf course maintenance side to accept or invest in GPS," Grief said. "There needs to be a fair and reasonable price that's acceptable to the marketplace." ■

EVERGREEN™
The Turf Blanket the World Relies On

- Earlier spring green-up
- Faster seed germination
- Deeper root development
- Delays dormancy in fall
- Ideal winter blanket
- Best for quick turf repairs
- Available in any size
- 3 or 7 year warranty covers

CALL TOLL FREE
1-800-387-5808

COVERMASTER™
COVERMASTER™
COVERMASTER™

MASTERS IN THE ART OF SPORTS SURFACE COVERS

WEB: www.covermaster.com
E-MAIL: info@covermaster.com

COVERMASTER INC., REXDALE, ON, M9V 5C3 TEL 416-745-1811 FAX 416-742-6837

© 2001 Flowtronex PSI, Inc.

our service area.

not just yet.

If mankind ever builds a golf course on the moon, we'll be there providing service. Flowtronex is the only pumping system manufacturer that offers a global, single-source, comprehensive service network with 24-hour emergency response. Whether it's repair services, replacement parts, retrofitting or installation consultations, count on our service technicians to respond quickly to your needs. And that's for all brands of manufactured pumping systems, not just our own.

FLOWTRONEX™
No One Makes Your Life Easier. No One.

1-800-786-7480
www.flowtronex.com