

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

### Dalton cutting his teeth at Copper Hills G & CC

By ANDREW OVERBECK

OXFORD, Mich. — Andrew Dalton, here at the 27-hole Copper Hills Golf & Country Club, started working on golf courses when he was in high school and has slowly worked his way up to a head superintendent's position. He has been in the top spot at Copper Hills since 1998, but continues to set his career objectives high.

"I want to become a Certified Golf Course Superintendent by the time I am 30 and become a Master Greenkeeper by the time I am 35," said Dalton. "And one time in my life I'd like to host a tournament."

Dalton, however, is quick to recognize the superintendents who have helped him get to where he is today. He credits Paul Reising, who is currently at Prestwick Village in Milford, and former superintendent John Gray for the agronomic knowledge that he has today.

"Those guys were a big inspiration to me and we still keep in contact," said Dalton.

#### GROWING IN

Copper Hills, which has been built nine holes at a time over a four-year period, provided Dalton with numerous learning experiences as he helped to grow in the last two nine-hole expansions. The course is owned by Curtis Wright who also runs an excavation company. Wright designed and built the golf course himself.

"The course is one of the toughest in Michigan," said Dalton. "It plays under 6,900 yards, but has a slope rating of 145."



Andrew Dalton

Each nine-hole course has its own character, according to Dalton.

"The Hill course has more of a parkland style and has a lot of elevation change and the Marsh course has a lot of wetlands," he said. "The Jungle course is more natural and is heavily wooded. There will be no houses on that part of the property."

Copper Hills, which sits on 367 acres, has 100 home sites. As the community, which currently has 16 homes, continues to evolve, Dalton will be involved in expanding the course's infrastructure.

"Right now we are working on plans for a clubhouse and a new maintenance facility," Dalton said. "We have also built more tees, redone some of the bunkers and continue to build rock walls and add landscaping." He also hopes to start getting water soon from the sewage treatment plant that is being built.

#### TRACKING WORKERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Working at a development that is still in flux means that Dalton has to work within a restrained budget.

"We have a little under \$400,000 and since 65 to 70 percent of that is taken up by labor costs, I have concentrated on improving efficiency in that area," he said.

Dalton has formulated numerous "route sheets" allowing him to track workers and ensure productivity.

"When my workers arrive in the morn-

#### DALTON'S TOOLS

- GREENS MOWERS:** 2 Jacobsen Greensking V, 2 John Deere 220
- TEE MOWERS:** 2 Jacobsen Greensking V, 2 John Deere 220
- FAIRWAY MOWERS:** 1 Jacobsen LF 3800, 1 John Deere 3235 A
- ROUGH MOWERS:** 2 Ransomes AR-250, 1 Ransomes Bobcat
- RIDING BUNKER RAKE:** 1 Toro Sand Pro
- TURF UTILITY VEHICLES:** 2 Club Car Carry-All, 3 John Deere 1800
- VERTI-CUT REELS:** 1 Jacobsen Green King II, 1 John Deere LF 3800
- AERIFIERS:** 1 Ryan Greens Aire 24, 1 Ryan Trucare
- TOPDRESSERS:** 1 Terra Topper, 1 Scotts push spreader
- REEL GRINDER:** Foley Accu-Pro 630
- BEDKNIFE GRINDER:** Foley 384
- IRRIGATION PUMP STATION:** Flowtronex, 1,100 gpm
- IRRIGATION SYSTEM:** Toro Osmac
- GOLF CAR FLEET:** 110 Club Car gas
- FLAGSTICKS:** Par Aide

- COMPUTER & ACCESSORIES:** 1 Compaq Proline A
- PRIMARY HERBICIDE:** Bent Trimec
- PRIMARY INSECTICIDE:** Merit
- PRIMARY FUNGICIDE:** Heritage



Dalton helped to grow in the Jungle course

- PRIMARY FERTILIZER:** Nature Safe
- CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT:** Mechanic
- OLDEST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT ON COURSE:** Mustang Skid Steer Loader
- TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF MAINTENANCE BUILDING:** 10,000 sq. ft.
- ANNUAL ROUNDS OF GOLF:** 23,000
- NORMAL GREEN SPEED:** 8.5'

ing they see their tasks for the day on the board and grab the appropriate route sheet," explained Dalton. "It lays out what he is supposed to be doing, the order that he is supposed to do it in, and the timetable in which he is expected to finish."

As a result, Dalton knows where his crew is at all times and can easily check up on them to see if they are behind or ahead of schedule. He said it is especially helpful in cases of emergency or equipment breakdown.

Dalton applies a similar formula to the

"scouting sheets" he developed for his assistants.

"I have put the basics of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) into a four-page notebook," he said. "It is an easy reference for them to use when identifying insects and diseases and it allows them to record and track damage symptoms."

"It gives me a better sense of when I need to spray and helps me cut back on chemical use," he added. "We want to be as environmentally safe here as possible because we have homeowners."

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