

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Rusnic guides Bear Brook through rough times

By ANDREW OVERBECK

FREDON, N.J. — When Jim Rusnic left Hershey Country Club in Hershey, Pa., to take his first superintendent position here at Bear Brook Golf Club, he had no idea how many challenges awaited him.

"Construction on the course started in 1997, they blasted and moved stuff on the front nine, and then the owners ran out of money," said Rusnic. "When I was brought in with International Golf Maintenance (IGM) in August 2000, the course was still unfinished. The owner could have opened it but didn't have the permitting."

Rusnic spent the year cleaning the course up and getting it on a proper maintenance regime.

"In 2000, the front nine was a year-and-a-half old but the greens were being mowed at a quarter-inch and the fairways at three-quarters of an inch. Thatch was everywhere. The aerifier had three inches of dust on it," he said. "The back nine had been seeded the previous fall and was extremely immature and two fairways never really healed from washouts. We basically rebuilt it."

Holes 12 and 16 were rebuilt and Rusnic concentrated on getting the turfgrass down to playable cutting heights, cutting the tree lines back and finishing the fine construction work.

However, as time dragged on and work continued the semi-private course, which is part of an 86-home housing develop-

ment, still didn't open. Then in October 2001, Gale & Kitson LLC stepped in and bought the troubled property. IGM lost the contract for the course, but Rusnic



Jim Rusnic

was rehired by Gale & Kitson to head up a \$1 million Roger Rulewich renovation of the layout.

Rusnic and golf course builder Earth Force Construction widened several holes on the front nine, blasted out shale mounds, entirely rebuilt the eighth hole, rebuilt the 12th

fairway and reworked the irrigation system.

"We also expanded the rough areas and made the course much wider and more friendly," said Rusnic. "We put in fescue on the banks and put a bluegrass/ryegrass mix on the flat areas. In addition we thinned out the trees and cleaned up rocks on holes four and five."

The course opened for play May 19, but there is more to do, said Rusnic.

"We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go,"

he said. "We are installing a three-tiered waterfall on the par-3, 15th hole and there is a lot of detail work left to do. We still have to level off the irrigation heads on the new holes and keep the weeds out of the fescue."

With the course finally open, Rusnic also is working to finalize maintenance practices.

"I am still treating it as a grow-in and hitting it with a lot of fertilizer," he said. "We are getting into aerifying,

"Thatch was everywhere. The aerifier had three inches of dust on it"
— Jim Rusnic

RUSNIC'S TOOLS

GREENS MOWERS: 6 John Deere 220A, 2 John Deere Triplexes

TEE MOWERS: 3 John Deere 220A

FAIRWAY MOWERS: 2 John Deere 3215A

ROUGH MOWERS: 1 Jacobsen AR-2500, 1 Toro 80" rotary, 1 John Deere 2653A, 1 National, 1 Steiner Deck Mower

RIDING BUNKER

RAKE: 1 Toro Trap Rake

TURF UTILITY

VEHICLES: 2

Kawasaki Mules, 2

John Deere Gators, 1

Cushman, 5 Yamahas

VERTI-CUT REELS: 1

Diamond Cut Triplex

AERIFIERS: 1 John

Deere 1500, 2 John

Deere 800

TOPDRESSERS: 1

Meter-Matic pull-be-

hind, 1 Jacobsen Cushman mount

TOURNAMENT SPEED ROLLER: 1

DMI

REEL GRINDER: Foley United

BEDKNIFE GRINDER: Foley United

IRRIGATION PUMP STATION: 3

75-hp Flowtronex pumps, 500 gpm

each

IRRIGATION SYSTEM: Rain Bird

GOLF CAR FLEET: 54 Yamaha gas

FLAGSTICKS: Standard Golf

COMPUTER & ACCESSORIES: Dell

PRIMARY HERBICIDE: Momentum

PRIMARY INSECTICIDE: Merit

PRIMARY FUNGICIDE: Banner

Maxx



The 11th hole at Bear Brook Golf Club.

PRIMARY SLOW-RELEASE

FERTILIZER: Lesco SCU

CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT: Irrigation

OLDEST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT ON

COURSE: Diamond Cut Triplex

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF

MAINTENANCE BUILDING: 20,000

sq. ft.

NORMAL GREEN SPEED: 9'

dethatching and topdressing programs because some of the fairways sit on solid shale. We have to keep wetting agents on them and do foliar feeding."

The aerification program on the shale fairways may have cost Rusnic some arms on his aerifier, but the dividends are starting to show.

"When I first came here you could cut a plug and pull the turf right up because the

roots were so shallow," said Rusnic. "Now I can't pull it out of the ground because the roots are pushing through the rock."

Rusnic knows that good conditioning is going to be key to the success of the layout.

"This is going to be a high-end semi-private course, and there are a lot in our area that we have to compete with. We have to make them want to come back here and play," added Rusnic.

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