

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

### Nicholson wrapping up work at Wilderness Ridge

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LINCOLN, Neb. — By the time superintendent Derek Nicholson is completely finished with the construction of the 27-hole Wilderness Ridge Golf Course here, he will have planted more than 5,000 trees, built 6,000 feet of man-made streams and waterfalls, and installed more than 5,000 irrigation heads.

Nicholson, who has been working on golf courses for 17 years, started at Wilderness Ridge a full 18 months before seed hit the ground. Because the owners, Home Realty, the Ridge Development Co., and landowner Richard Large, wanted to build a totally unique golf course development, Nicholson spent a year creating the stream beds and waterfalls that run throughout the property.

"They wanted to make the course unique," said Nicholson. "The owners brought in more than 300 train car loads of granite from Minnesota. For the first year all we did was handle rock. I had a staff that did nothing but throw rock in streams for a whole summer."

The layout, which was designed by local golf pro Jim White and golf course architect Grant Wencel and opened for play last year, reaches its crescendo at the signature 14th hole that features an elevated island green that is backed by a 50-foot high rock wall on one side and a 40-foot waterfall on the other side.

#### MANAGING RUNOFF

The water features, however, have a purpose beyond visual effect. The course

is located adjacent to a local nature preserve, so the layout was designed so that all course run off would be collected by the 21 lakes and ponds on the site.

"No water leaves here," said Nicholson. "It all drains into the lake system."

During construction, Nicholson did a study on how much nitrogen and phosphorous leached through the greens. The results helped him design his fertility program. "It taught me how much fertility is lost during irrigation and rain events," he said.

According to Nicholson, a good fertility program is crucial to the health of a course. "I try to spray as little as possible," he said. "I believe that if you have a good fertility program and if you water properly, it will do wonders for your spraying program."

The runoff and water collection also provides a steady water supply for the course and its extensive water features. Nicholson is not only responsible for the irrigation of the golf course, but also for running lines and heads to the property lines of the 350-house development.

"The golf course runs pretty much wall to wall," said Nicholson. "I have bluegrass roughs that I have to maintain up to the backyards of houses."

During the peak season, the course will use 1.5 million gallons of water a night and the water features and some ponds are fed by three wells. Nicholson estimates that after he is done extending the irrigation system to the property lines, the course will have more than 5,000 irri-



Derek Nicholson

## NICHOLSON'S TOOLS

**GREENS MOWERS:** 4 Toro Flex 21 walking greens mowers, 1 Toro GM3000

**TEE MOWERS:** 3 Toro GM1600 walking tee/collar mowers, 1 Toro GM3000

**FAIRWAY MOWERS:** 3 Toro 5200-D

**ROUGH MOWERS:** 1 Toro 580-D, 1 Toro 4000D, 2 Toro 325-D

**RIDING BUNKER**

**RAKE:** 1 Toro 5020

Trap Rake, 1 Toro

3010 Trap Rake

**TURF UTILITY VE-**

**HICLES:** 3 Toro

Workman 3200, 3

Toro Workman 2100

**VERTI-CUT REELS:** 1

set Toro

**AERIFIERS:** 1 Toro

greens aerifier, 1 Toro

Procore 660, 1 Toro

686

**TOPDRESSERS:** 1

Terra-Hopper, 1 Toro 2500, 1 Tycrop

MH400

**REEL GRINDER:** Express Dual Spin

Grinder

**BEDKNIFE GRINDER:** Anglemaster

**IRRIGATION PUMP STATION:**

Flowtronex, 2,400 gpm

**IRRIGATION SYSTEM:** Hunter Golf

**GOLF CAR FLEET:** 75 Club Car electric

**FLAGSTICKS:** Par Aide

**COMPUTER & ACCESSORIES:** Dell Pentium III

**PRIMARY HERBICIDE:** Battleship

**PRIMARY INSECTICIDE:** Merit

**PRIMARY FUNGICIDE:** Subdue/Daconil

**PRIMARY SLOW-RELEASE FERTILIZER:** SCU

**CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT:** My assis-



The 14th green is backed by a 40-foot waterfall.

tant superintendent

**OLDEST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT ON COURSE:** 1970 Vermeer V434 trencher

**TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF MAINTENANCE BUILDING:** 10,000 sq. ft.

**ANNUAL ROUNDS OF GOLF:** 35,000

**NORMAL GREEN SPEED:** 9'-10'

gation heads and a pump station that can handle 3,200 gallons per minute.

#### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

With construction still going on, how does Nicholson keep the bentgrass turf at the high-end public course in good shape?

"I have a good assistant in Chad Hansen," said the busy superintendent. "He is the hardest-working human being that I have been associated with." Hansen

handles day-to-day duties allowing Nicholson to handle the overall picture.

For Nicholson, the overall picture, once all the final projects are wrapped up, includes gaining Audubon certification, becoming a certified golf course superintendent and more.

"The course turned out great," he said. "I envision big things here, like a Nebraska Open or a Buy.com Tour event."

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