

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Witcraft beating drought at Musket Ridge GC

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MYERSVILLE, Md.— True to its name, Musket Ridge Golf Club sits on ridge here 2,200 feet above sea level one hour northwest of Washington D.C. The course, designed by Joe Lee, had its grand opening May 10 and longtime superintendent Douglas Witcraft has been on board since the grow-in began in spring 2001.

While Witcraft wouldn't trade the stunning views of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and Catocin Mountain to the east, the location does present some agronomic challenges.

"We get wind up here every day," said Witcraft. "Now that helps us in drainage and keeping fungal

diseases down, but water conservation and usage is a big concern."

Musket Ridge pulls water from two wells that feed two ponds on the property that provides ample irrigation supply. This year, however, has been especially dry in Maryland and the state has required courses in the area to reduce water use by 10 percent because it is facing 10- to 15-inch rainfall deficits.

"We are required to monitor monthly readings and report them to the state quarterly," said Witcraft. "So far we have reduced water use about 15 to 20 percent. That largely has to do with the fact that we are using wetting agents and that we are no longer growing in the golf course."

Witcraft has put down two eight-ounce

applications of Brilliance wetting agent on the greens and tees at the course, which has L-93 creeping bentgrass from tee to green. The roughs are a mix of fescues and bluegrasses.

While he has lost some areas in the roughs and has to hand-water high spots on the fairways, Witcraft has saved water and labor with wetting agent applications on greens and tees. With just 12 people on staff, that is a huge labor savings.

"We gave it a shot this year and it seemed to help greens and tees a lot," he said. "It has held up well in the heat and we have not had to send guys around syringing. That cuts down on labor costs."

Witcraft has been so impressed with the performance, that he is adding enough wetting agents into next year's budget to cover fairways. He also plans to topdress problem areas on the largely clay soil fairways this fall.

ADDING ANOTHER NINE

Besides the other normal fall maintenance activities, Witcraft may also be busy working on an additional nine holes.

"Joe Lee has already designed it, the permits are in place and we are just waiting for the go-ahead from the owners," he said.

Witcraft is looking forward to being on-site for the actual construction this time and hopes it will help improve shortfalls he has noticed on the original 18.

"The way the contours in the fairway



Douglas Witcraft and his goose dog, Abby

WITCRAFT'S TOOLS

GREENS MOWERS: 10 Jacobsen 522

TEE MOWERS: 2 Jacobsen Triplex Greens King IV

FAIRWAY MOWERS: 2 Jacobsen 3400

ROUGH MOWERS: 2 Jacobsen

RIDING BUNKER RAKE: 2 Smithco Super Star

TURF UTILITY VEHICLES: 11 Carryalls, 3 Cushman

VERTI-CUT REELS: 3

Jacobsen

AERIFIERS: 2 Cushman GA 30,

2 Ryan

TOPDRESSERS: 2 Turfco

REEL GRINDER: 1 Express Dual

BED KNIFE GRINDER: 1

Anglemaster

IRRIGATION PUMP STATION: Flowtronex, 2,100

gpm

IRRIGATION SYSTEM: Toro Osmac

GOLF CAR FLEET: 80 Club Car electric

FLAGSTICKS: 36 Standard

COMPUTER & ACCESSORIES: 2

Dell

PRIMARY HERBICIDE: Trimec Bent

PRIMARY INSECTICIDE: Delta Guard

PRIMARY FUNGICIDE: Banner Maxx

PRIMARY SLOW-RELEASE FERTILIZER: Nutralene

CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT: Water



The eighth hole at Musket Ridge Golf Club

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF MAINTENANCE BUILDING: 6,800

sq. ft.

ANNUAL ROUNDS OF GOLF: 30,000

NORMAL GREEN SPEED: 8'

run, water doesn't get to the drains quick enough," said Witcraft. "So we have gone in and done detail work because the final grading was not done well in places."

The new nine holes will run adjacent to the existing 18 holes on the 200-acre property. The 27-hole complex will then be set up as three individual nines that players can combine any way they want on any given day. The course has trees, but is a more links-style layout with plenty of room to recover. Though there are elevation

changes, they are all downhill so the layout is easily walkable.

With 27 holes, Witcraft said the owners hope to draw more play in from Baltimore and Washington D.C., and perhaps even the commander in chief.

"We are four miles as the crow flies from Camp David," he said. "Some secret service people and the president's valet have played, and we hope to one day get the big boy [President Bush] out here."

Green Touch Ultimate Organizer Racks

Do your Utility Vehicles look like this?



Imagine...



Why Organize?

- Increase Productivity
- Convey a Professional Image
- Maximize Utility Vehicle Bed Space
- Reduce Damage to Power Tools

www.green-touch.com

Call for Fleet Quotes

800-621-6919