

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Ward's Olympia Fields CC is ready for U.S. Open play

By ANDREW OVERBECK

OLYMPIA FIELDS, Ill. — Dave Ward has seen his share of master plans in his 13 years here at Olympia Fields Country Club. The latest batch of design changes were drafted by architect Mark Mungeam in preparation for this month's U.S. Open, but Ward has spent nearly his entire tenure at the club working on one renovation project after another.

When he arrived in 1991, Ward went to work on a rehab plan (also prepared by Mungeam) for both the North and the South courses. When the club got the 1997 U.S. Senior Open, the plans for the North Course, which was designed by Willie Park Jr. in 1923, were accelerated.

"We redid the whole thing," said Ward. "We redid all the bunkers, rebuilt half the tees and moved the fifth green back away from the sixth tee. We did all that work in 1995."

The USGA, however, wanted to take it up a notch for the U.S. Open.

"For the U.S. Open we had to deepen bunkers, steepen banks and get them tucked in tighter to the green," Ward said. "We also added more length and narrowed the fairways."

In addition to regrassing all greens with L-93 creeping bentgrass, two greens were rebuilt to minimize slope and add more pin placements.

"We had greens with 4.5 percent slope through the green with cupping areas at 2.5 to 3 percent slope. So we rebuilt them," said Ward. "They look the same, we just took some tilt out and created some forward hole locations."

HANDLING THE CHANGES

As with all renovation work, however, some changes went more smoothly than others did.

When the club revamped its irrigation system, it built a lake to store water on-site to improve efficiency. Previously the irrigation water was pumped out of the ground and directly into the irrigation system. However, making that switch exacerbated the course's problem with its high-bicarbonate irrigation source.

"Our water has high levels of bicarbonates as it is," said Ward. "The lake is connected by a stream channel that gets run-off from a road complex, so in the spring we get a lot of sodium coming in."

In a normal summer, rain would help flush the soils of sodium, but last year's drought took its toll on the turf. Ward has since

installed a sulfur burner and started applying high-cal lime and gypsum to knock down the sodium levels in the soil.

Ward also had to make a major adjustment with the irrigation system around the new, steeper bunkers.

"We have really heavy clay soils here and the irrigation we put in was not sufficient to keep the banks healthy," he said. "So we installed another 451 spray heads around 42 different bunkers and instituted a foliar spray program for those banks."

PREPPING FOR THE OPEN

This winter Ward and his crew did tree work to clear up shade issues around greens and make room for spectator bleachers, TV towers and vendor tents. Now Ward is making the mad dash to the finish and hoping that soil temperatures and growing conditions come along for the ride.

Once the Open is over, however, the renovation work will pick up right where it left off. Sometime this summer, Ward will be turning his attention to the South Course, which has been patiently waiting its turn for a face-lift.

"The master plan on the North Course is done," he said. "If all goes well, we will start on a big project on the South Course this summer. It's a great golf course, and I'd like to get working on it."



Dave Ward

WARD'S TOOLS

GREENS MOWERS:

14 John Deere 180 B

TEE MOWERS:

15 John Deere 220 B

FAIRWAY MOWERS:

7 John Deere 3515 B

ROUGH MOWERS:

4 Bevo Superflex

RIDING BUNKER RAKE:

4 John Deere Bunker rake 1200 A

TURF UTILITY VEHICLES:

21 Turf Gator, 7 ProGator

BEDKNIFE GRINDER:

Anglemaster 300

IRRIGATION PUMP STATION:

Flowtronex, 3,600 gpm

IRRIGATION SYSTEM:

Rainbird Cirrus

GOLF CAR FLEET:

E-Z-GO

FLAGSTICKS:

Laser Link

COMPUTER & ACCESSORIES:

1 Dell, 1 Gateway

PRIMARY HERBICIDE:



The 10th hole at Olympia Fields CC, site of this month's U.S. Open

VERTI-CUT REELS:

6 Thatch Away

AERIFIERS:

3 John Deere Aercore 800, 1 John Deere Aercore 2000

TOPDRESSERS:

2 Dakota 410

TOURNAMENT SPEED

ROLLER:

2 Smithco 7502

REEL GRINDER:

Express Dual 3000

Pendimethalin

PRIMARY INSECTICIDE:

Merit

PRIMARY FUNGICIDE:

Daconil

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF MAINTENANCE BUILDING:

12,600 sq. ft.

ANNUAL ROUNDS OF GOLF:

44,000 (on 36 holes)

NORMAL GREEN SPEED:

10' - 10.5'

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