

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Isaacs takes Spring Valley back to traditional look

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LEXINGTON, Ky. — In a day and age when superintendents change jobs on a more and more frequent basis, it is unusual to find someone who has worked at only one golf course in his entire career. Yet that is just what Richard Isaacs, superintendent here at Spring Valley Golf Club, has done.

"My dad Bige started as the superintendent here in 1958, and I started working for him when I was 13, raking traps in the summertime," said Isaacs. "I went to Eastern Kentucky for my turf management degree and I became his assistant. I took over his position in 1997 when he retired."

When Isaacs took over the course, which was designed by former golf pro and superintendent Clarence "Buck" Blankenship in 1949, it was beginning to show its age. The club has 365 members, but Isaacs said the owners wanted to bump that up closer to 400. With that in mind, he has been overseeing a two-year renovation process that is scheduled to wrap up this year.

"We brought in architect Keith Foster to do a 10-year master plan and Terry Bohannon's Live Oak Construction to do the work," said Isaacs. "We have con-

centrated on the bunkers because year after year the members would say 'The traps are horrible.'"

According to Isaacs, the original bunkers had no drains in them and since so many were added and filled in over the years they had little strategic content.

When it came to how the new bunkers would look, the course decided on a Seth Raynor look.

"Foster told us to go over to The Camargo Club in Cincinnati to check out their Raynor bunkers and we basically fed off that style," said Isaacs. "Our owner has been in construction his whole life and he thinks that if it's not straight, it's not right. Raynor was a road builder before he got into building golf courses and he thought the same way. So those two matched up real well."

The bunkers, as a result, are squared off, as are all the tees and greens. The tees were laser graded and the greens surrounds were squared off in preparation for an eventual greens renovation.

"It has more of a British look," said Isaacs. "We have squared things off to carry that theme throughout."

As part of the bunker work, Isaacs has installed Meyer zoysia

grass on all the faces to help save on maintenance costs because it is slower growing in the summer. All car paths and landscaping beds were also upgraded to provide a more consistent look throughout the course.

The renovation process began one hole at a time in fall 2001, and Isaacs and Bohannon finished 10 holes before the start of the playing season. This fall they decided to close down nine holes entirely to keep from disrupting play. The renovation will be completed this spring.

The final phase of the renovation will be new USGA-spec greens to replace the current push-up greens, but Isaacs said that is still a ways off.

"This renovation sets us up for the final phase, which would be coring the old greens and putting in USGA-spec greens," said Isaacs. "We didn't want to do work now and then turn around and have to redo it."

To show members what new greens would look and play like, Isaacs took out the club's swimming pool and put in a USGA-spec putting green with L-93 creeping bentgrass.

"This gets the members involved and shows them what the greens could be like. I don't think it putts any faster, but it looks better and it holds the ball well. The members like it."



Richard Isaacs

ISAACS' TOOLS

GREENS MOWERS:

2 Jacobsen Greens Kings

TEE MOWERS:

1 Ransome Greensplex

FAIRWAY MOWERS:

2 Jacobsen LF 128

ROUGH MOWERS:

1 Rhino Turf Flex

RIDING BUNKER RAKE:

1 Toro Sand Pro

TURF UTILITY VEHICLES:

3 Carryall II, 1 Toro Workman

VERTI-CUT REELS:

IRRIGATION SYSTEM:

Rainbird heads and valves,

Toro LTC control

GOLF CAR FLEET:

Club Car electric

FLAGSTICKS:

Par-Aide

PRIMARY HERBICIDE:

UHS Mec Amine-D

PRIMARY INSECTICIDE:

Delta Guard/Merit

PRIMARY FUNGICIDE:

Daconil Weatherstick



The course features squared-off bunkers reminiscent of Seth Raynor.

1 Jacobsen

AERIFIERS:

1 John Deere Aer Core 800, 1 Ryan

TOPDRESSERS:

1 Turfco Mete-R-Matic III

REEL GRINDER:

1 Foley Accu-Pro 630

BEDKNIFE GRINDER:

1 Foley 660

IRRIGATION PUMP STATION:

Flowtronex, 400 gpm

PRIMARY SLOW-RELEASE FERTILIZER:

Contec

CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT:

My crew

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF MAINTENANCE BUILDING:

3,500 sq. ft.

ANNUAL ROUNDS OF GOLF:

20,000

NORMAL GREEN SPEED:

8.5'-9.5'

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