Jeff Elliot makes the final preparations for this year's Bank of America Colonial May 22 to 25. The PGA Tour event, which was on the calendar since 1946, attracts a lot of attention. However, Elliot doesn't mind the extra work, or the pre-tournament buzz. "Everyone's excited, which is great because we don't want to hear them talking about the golf course, we want the players to be the focal point," he said. "That's good because we are counting on more media and more fans, so we are putting up more bleachers, adjusting crowd control measures, putting up more scoreboards and moving around marshal's tents." 

According to Elliot, agronomic preparations are also going smoothly. "We have changed fertilization practices to try not to have too much grass out there and get the green speed to stay consistent. We did granular applications early, but as of the beginning of April, we are total foliar once or twice a week." The course also put in a sulfur burner this year to help deal with its poor irrigation water, which has high pH and sodium and bicarbonate levels. "We pull water out of the Clear Fork of the Trinity, which runs out of Lake Benbrook," said Elliot. "The sulfur burner helps the soils flush better, helps with drainage problems and gives us firmer greens. The Tour players want fast and firm." 

Elliot is aiming for a green speed of 10.5 for the tournament, because, he said, if they get up past 11, wind can cause the ball to move on greens. The greens were upgraded to A4 bentgrass during the 1999 Keith Foster bunker and green renovation. "As a putting surface, A4 can't be beat," Elliot said. "Because of its upright growth, it lacks a little bit on recovery and healing from ball marks and stress." The rough is another area Elliot is watching carefully. The 419 bermudagrass is always slow to bounce back," he said. "We fertilize in February with ammonium sulfate to push the roughs and we put down slow-release nitrogen to carry us over in the fall. They are greening up now, but in the shade they don't grow up to two-and-half to three- and-a-half inch rough like they like to see on Tour." With tournament preparations in hand, does Elliot think about Sorenstam's chances? "This is an old-style, short course where you have to work the ball," he said. "That's why she's coming. It fits her game better. Hitting it 10 miles is not going to be as much of an advantage here. It's a player's golf course."