

# An encompassing ap



Bunkers flank the par-3 seventh hole at Dublin Ranch Golf Course in Dublin, Calif.

# Approach

## DUBLIN RANCH'S EXECUTIVE-STYLE COURSE AIMS TO BE ALL THINGS TO ALL GOLFERS

by  
DOUG  
SAUNDERS

**F**ifteen years ago, a Taiwanese real-estate developer searched the grasslands east of San Francisco looking for attractive investment property. Since then, the region around his piece of land in Dublin, Calif., has seen considerable growth. For R.S. Lin and his management team, DTT Management, the investment in agricultural land turned into a gold mine as the housing market continued to be in high demand and land prices rose.

Initially, Lin approached the transformation of the 1,500-acre parcel of land like many other developers have done with projects like this by creating a series of housing developments around a golf course. But the similarities end there. His course, Dublin Ranch Golf Course, is an effort to upgrade the concept of the executive-style course to address one of the reasons that some golfers leave the game: the time it takes to play it.

For Lin, who is an avid golfer, this also represented the chance to own a course. He envisioned keeping the golf course as a public facility that would serve the new housing communities and the expanding city of Dublin.

The site for Dublin Ranch rests on a rolling piece of land that required extensive earth moving to form suitable housing sites. The parcel left for golf course development was restrictive because of severe elevation changes.

Lin hired golf course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. to devise a suitable course for the hilly site. The design team, which included golf course architect Don Knott, proposed an 18-hole par-63 course that featured two par-5s, five par-4s, and 11 par-3s.

"By the time the homesites were established, the area for the course lent itself best to a series of par-3 holes," Jones Jr. says. "We have created many of these executive-style courses throughout the country for decades, and they are especially effective in urban areas where land is at a premium. We were able to add two par-5s and five par-4s to give the course more variety."

The advantages that usually are gained by the executive-length course, including less maintenance and construction expenses, didn't figure into the decision-making process for the developers. The main concern was to have a complete design for the housing sites and the course, so the massive amount of earthwork involved could be accomplished as efficiently as possible.

"More than six million cubic yards of earth had to be moved to shave the hills and create the pads for the housing site," says Mike Vickers, who first was retained as a project manager for the construction of the

### AT A GLANCE:

#### Dublin Ranch Golf Course

|                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Location:           | Dublin, Calif.                |
| Course type:        | 18-hole daily-fee facility    |
| Cost:               | \$6.2 million                 |
| Construction began: | March 2002                    |
| Course opened:      | February 2004                 |
| Yardage:            | 3,412; 3,877; 4,350 and 4,820 |
| Par:                | 63                            |
| Average green size: | 8,000 square feet             |
| Number of bunkers:  | 38                            |
| Fairways:           | Bluegrass/ryegrass mix        |
| Tees:               | Ryegrass                      |
| Greens:             | Bentgrass                     |
| Slope:              | 95, 104, 105 and 107          |
| Rating:             | 59.3, 60.4, 61.9 and 63.4     |
| Superintendent:     | Mike Vickers                  |
| Developer:          | DTT Management                |
| Construction Co.:   | Wadsworth Constuction         |
| Architect:          | Robert Trent Jones Jr.        |
| Owner:              | R.S. Lin                      |

Photo: Freddy Bird



Photo: Freddy Bird

The greens at Dublin Ranch average 8,000 square feet. Pictured above is the fifth hole.

course and then was kept as the golf course superintendent. "Planning where to build up areas and where to store excess soil for later use was crucial in our initial planning."

### The right design

When Lin looked for a golf course architect

eight years ago, the golf market was strong; but by the time he began construction, golf suddenly was dealing with a decline of rounds and the challenge of golfers leaving the game. The plan Lin decided on suddenly looked like a timely decision on his part.

"As technology in golf equipment improves, designers are wondering how big should golf courses be?" Knott says. "At some point, as you build large courses for professional players, the courses become too difficult for the average player. At Dublin Ranch, we tried to design the course so that it would be in between a par-3 practice course and a championship course and would be an enjoyable golf course for all levels of players."

The course consists of two nine hole layouts that ring the edges of the site. Even though there are only 112 acres of maintained turf, the course is spread throughout almost 300 acres, which gives it a larger feel. Extensive earth moving helped to form inviting green sites that hang on the edge of hill sides and create pleasant views of the valley and Mount Diablo.

"We made a conscious effort to make each hole as individual as possible," Jones Jr. says. "We only put in 38 bunkers because the consistent prevailing wind provides adequate protection to the holes. The large landing areas also add to the inviting look of each golf hole."

Each hole features five tee boxes, which provide length and angle variety to the greens. The course plays 3,412 yards from the forward tees and 4,820 yards from the back tees. The par-3s provide a variety of lengths from 143 yards to 224 yards, and the two par-5s are 549 yards and 521 yards, respectively.

Also, the greens are large, averaging 8,000 square feet.

"That gives me a lot of pin placements," Vickers says. "The entire layout has the look and feel of a regulation golf course. Players that have come here are surprised at what they find."

Vickers came to Dublin Ranch after several years of working on the construction side of the golf course business. After graduating from Michigan State University's turf school in 1994, he joined Greenscape, a golf

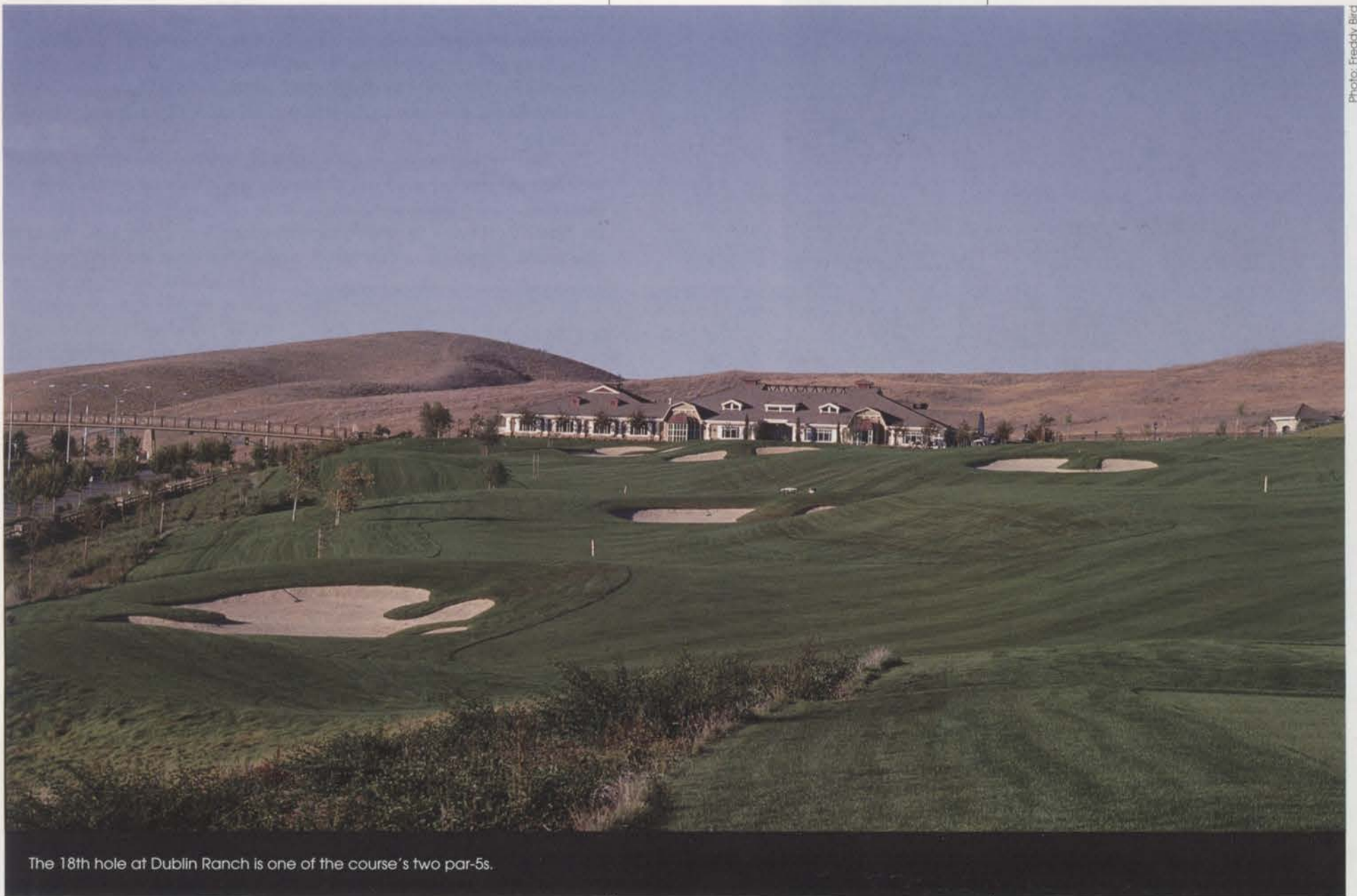


Photo: Freddy Bird

The 18th hole at Dublin Ranch is one of the course's two par-5s.

## design case study

construction firm that built the majority of Jones Jr.'s designs.

"I felt that it would be valuable to get some construction experience for my resume, but I enjoyed that facet of the business so much that I stayed in the construction end for 10 years, Vickers says. "Mr. Jones referred me to Mr.

Lin as he was looking for a project manager to oversee the work at Dublin Ranch. Wadsworth Construction did the work here while I looked for ways to keep costs under control."

### Building it

Construction of the course finally began in



Photo: Freddy Bird

Mike Vickers, left, and Dan Tsai hope to generate 30,000 rounds this year.

March 2002 and was shaped and planted by November of that year. In some areas of the course, 40 feet of fill was added, and both water tanks that service the course were surrounded with mounds of dirt to keep them out of sight.

"The city of Dublin continued to have major input in the construction and visual appearance of the course," Vickers says. "This is the first, and probably the last, golf project in the city, and they took a strong interest in how it would fit into the area."

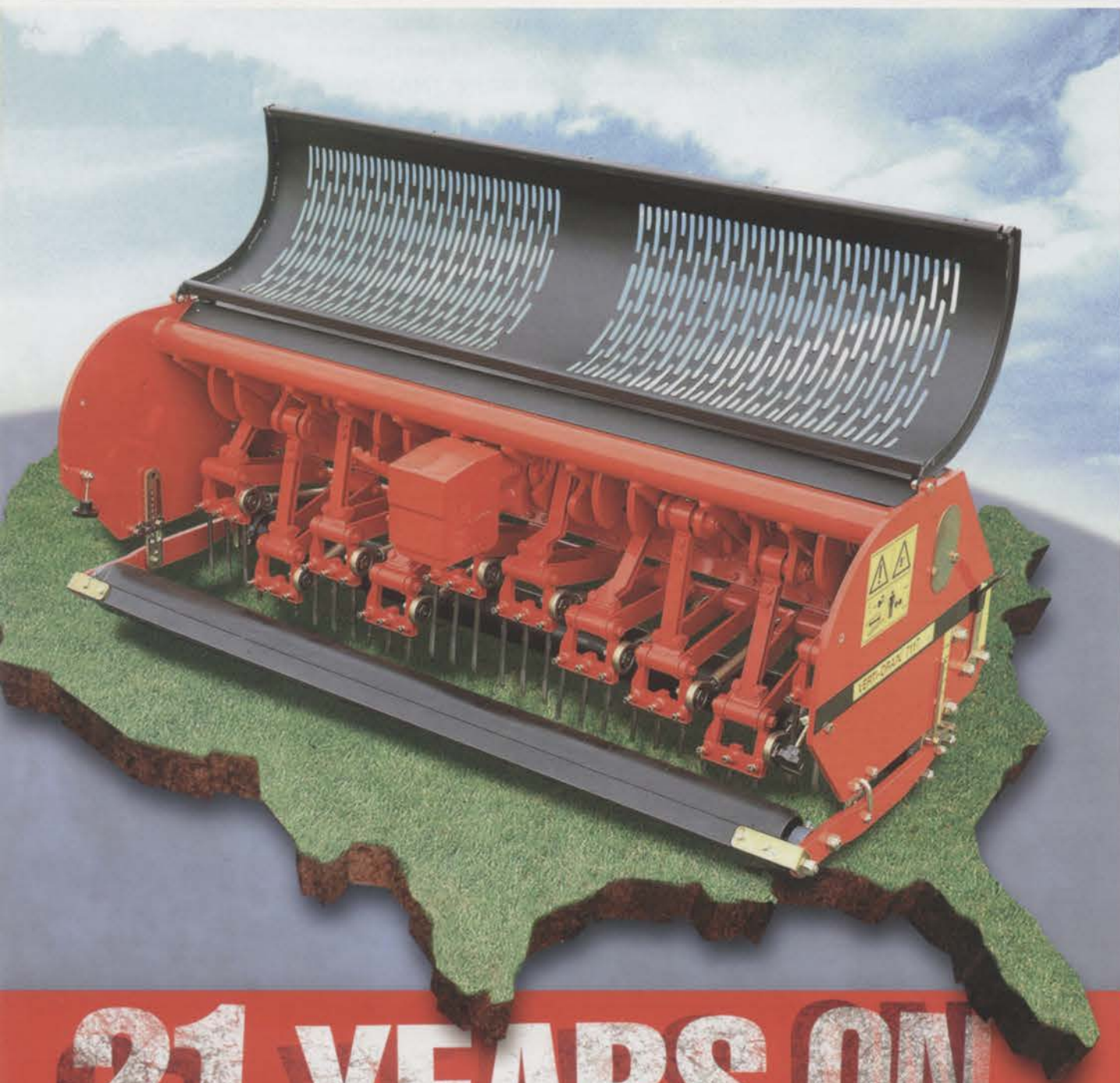
At one point during the winter months, a Bald Eagle was found nesting in an oak tree three-fourths of a mile from the course. City officials, based on advice from California Fish & Game, asked that construction of the course and houses in the bird's view be halted until nesting was completed. The developers also built a roost for the eagle further up in the canyon so it would have a more secluded nesting area in future years.

Throughout construction, grow-in and completion, the one element that was never compromised was the desire to do things in a first-class manner. Lin, who lives in Taiwan and speaks no English, has taken great pride in the golf course he created. Daniel Tsai, general manager of Dublin Ranch, says Lin feels that the emphasis on presenting a well-maintained shorter golf course sets Dublin Ranch apart from the other courses in the area.

"We offer a first-class course that allows you to use every club in your bag and can be played in 3.5 hours," Tsai says. "We are also able to offer this course at a rate that is less than our competitors."

The course features a bluegrass/ryegrass mix on the fairways, straight ryegrass on tees and Dominant Plus bentgrass on the greens. Lin kept Vickers as the superintendent because of the trust that had been developed throughout the construction phase. Vickers had the luxury of allowing the course to grow in for 14 months before it opened to the public.

"Dublin Ranch is different from other executive courses because we spent almost as much in construction as a full-length course due to the massive earthwork," Vickers says. "Also, we are sparing no expense on maintenance because we know that we must present a high-quality product to get golfers to come and play a par-63 layout."



# 21 YEARS ON AMERICAN TURF

Over the past 21 years, innovative design, craftsmanship and heavy duty construction make Redexim Charterhouse products the standard of quality in the sports turf marketplace. By building relationships with turf care professionals, Redexim Charterhouse has listened, learned and produced the best machines money can buy. Redexim Charterhouse has not only gained a reputation of being an industry leader, but we have also earned your trust.

**Redexim**  
**Charterhouse**

21 YEARS IN AMERICA  
AND STILL GROWING

1-800-597-5664 • Fax: 570-602-3060 • [www.redexim.com](http://www.redexim.com)

Completing other parts of the facility on time were important, as well.

"We wanted to finish all of the construction around the course, including the clubhouse, bathroom facilities, maintenance buildings and dirt work before we opened to the public in order to feature a complete package to our customers," Tsai says.

### Earning a reputation

As Tsai manages the course through its inaugural season, he sees it as a learning year. Management hopes to generate 30,000 rounds. But they must face the challenge of dealing with golfers' perceptions of Dublin Ranch.

"Most golfers call and find out that we are a par-63 course and are cautious," Tsai says. "They are afraid that we are a little course in a field or near a driving range. When players come here, they are surprised by what they find. It is our mission to find the proper way to bring people here to try us out in our first year."

Tsai has instituted 10-minute tee-time intervals so players don't stack up on holes. This is another way to guarantee an enjoyable golfing experience for players. He says that's important to attract serious golfers during his first year of operation.

"I want the regular golfers to discover us first in order to develop our reputation," he says. "While our course is attractive to many levels of golfers, I don't want us to be considered a beginner's course, a practice course or just a family course. Dublin Ranch's design allows us to be all of these things over time, but this first year is important to us to develop a strong reputation."

Business groups also are a target audience.

"This layout would be an excellent venue for corporate groups that usually include all levels of golfers, as even the occasional

player can get around without losing a ball," Knott says.

Lin's decision to build a par-63 course was driven by space restrictions, but he saw the value of providing a quality course that could be played in a short period of time. However, the immediate hurdle is to sell the concept of

a shorter course to the golfing public.

"We feel that as players find out about what we offer here, we will win over the repeat players," Tsai says. "Only time will tell." GCN

*Doug Saunders is a freelance writer from Truckee, Calif. He can be reached at dougs@sierra.net.*



If you have Dollar Spot and Brown Patch on overseeded greens, tees and fairways ...  
**LS-44 Creeping Bentgrass can save money by reducing fungicide treatments!**



Mike Sullivan of Hawthorne Hills Golf Club in Lima, Ohio had this experience:

"I had been having trouble with Dollar Spot on a few of my Penncross greens for the last few years. Last fall, I overseeded with LS-44 in areas that were persistently and heavily infected with Dollar Spot. LS-44 established quickly and looked good. This year the areas I had overseeded have not developed any Dollar Spot. I'm looking forward to overseeding LS-44 in more areas this fall."

LS-44 has genetic disease resistance and can help you by decreasing your fungicide applications.

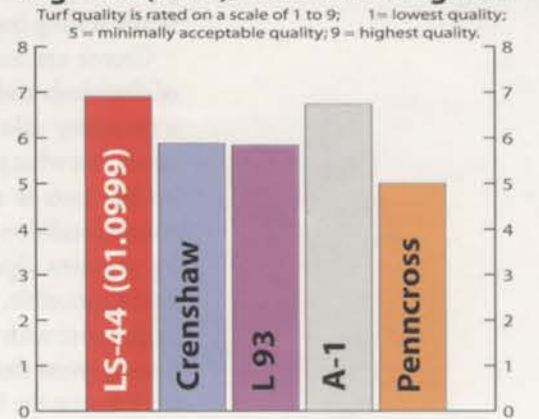
If you're planning to overseed with an old variety such as Penncross .. why not use LS-44 instead.

You can save money and get a better turf!

**LS-44 a better choice for your course!**



**2002 Quality (Mean), NC State, Pinehurst, NC**  
**High cut (5/32)/ with NO Fungicide**



For the complete copy of the North Carolina State University Trial results, contact Links Seed



32041 Cartney Drive / Harrisburg, OR 97446  
 Phone: 541-995-6836 / Fax: 541-995-6906

linksseed.com

Other New Turfgrass Varieties Available from Links Seed:

- Terradyne Perennial Ryegrass
- Turnberry Tall Fescue
- Golden Nugget Kentucky Bluegrass



The first hole at Dublin Ranch overlooks the city of Dublin.