



THE BELLVILLE PROJECT: COOPERATION IN CONSTRUCTION

Can a private owner with modest resources build a course with today's escalating prices? The answer is yes, and Gene Banks of Bellville, Ohio, proved it by completing his 18-hole executive course for close to \$200,000, less than one-half of the national construction average. Gene's method was simple, and the key was good prior planning and working with professional people throughout the project.

Many years ago Banks bought 62 acres of land near Bellville with thoughts of someday building a course. Over the past six years the idea began to grow. While economy in construction was of vital importance, Banks was not prepared to sacrifice quality; in fact, he was convinced from the start success would depend on having a course that was well-planned, challenging, and esthetically beautiful . . . one golfers with varying degrees of expertise would enjoy playing.

Banks began by hiring Jack Kidwell and Dr. Mike Hurdzan, golf course architects from Columbus, Ohio, to do a feasibility study for him. Their study showed all possible layout plans, climatic factors, a soil mapping analysis, underground water resources, different methods of greens construction, variations in

irrigation systems, a construction cost estimate, a sample budget, and a projected income.

Armed with all the facts about the good and bad features of the property and proposed project, Banks went to his attorney, accountant, and banker for their opinions. After considering all the facts, he used his land as collateral to borrow the construction funds.

After sealed bidding, Gene decided he could economize on building the course by subcontracting with local contractors, providing Kidwell and Hurdzan would give close field inspection. At this time, a local technical representative for Scotts' ProTurf, Dick Warner, contacted the architects and arranged to meet with Gene and his son Darrell. Warner offered a full line of services, including continued soil testing, and recommendations for seed and fertilizer mixes and future maintenance programs. In addition, Dick was able to offer Banks a delayed billing which helped with overall financing.

Final course layout was a par 62 measuring 3,470 yards off the men's tees (2,948 from ladies' tees; 3,778 yards tournament distance). The design, including the variability in yardage off the several sets of tees,

was planned to encourage beginners and challenge the better players, rewarding accuracy even in less powerful golfers. Jack Kidwell comments: "The well-designed executive course may be the most important catalyst in the future growth of golf. An executive course appears to be within the physical capabilities of older folks, women and younger people, and therefore they don't feel intimidated. This course will start new golfers who in time will need lessons, equipment and more courses." (From the back tees on several of Kidwell and Hurdzan's executive courses, the course record is par, indicating the challenge inherent in their design for golfers on all skill levels.)

Banks was able to construct the course at a low cost for several reasons, stemming from careful attention to the architects' plan. Dr. Hurdzan says, "Our design was concerned primarily with utilizing all natural resources and carefully balancing excavations to fill requirements. No earth was wasted or moved twice. If we cut a tee or green into a hill, we used the earth at that site or one nearby. Seven ponds were dug next to areas requiring safety buffer zones and large volumes of fill." This economy of

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design and construction, the owners estimate, saved about \$18,000 in building costs.

Rather than cutting down trees for clearing, the decision was to move existing trees on the course under the architects' direction. The result was that several hundred six-to-eight-inch diameter white pines were transplanted, each twenty to thirty feet high, giving the course an established look, at an estimated \$18,000 savings over the cost of clearing the site and planting new trees.

A further \$30,000-40,000 savings was realized by using a simplified greens construction method. Kidwell and Hurdzan have built hundreds of golf greens using 75 percent tested and selected sand and 25 percent well-decomposed organic matter with a three-inch pure sand layer over the graveled tile lines. This amended soil can be mixed on

site, and there is a definite textural barrier effect in the overall function of the green.

Climatic analysis and soil analysis of the feasibility study showed that normal rainfall was approximately an inch per week and bluegrass turf could go 14-18 days without water on the native soils. Therefore, an automatic tee and green irrigation system was recommended and installed, while a manual system was specified for fairways, permitting an additional savings of about \$16,500. Turf-grasses used were bentgrass on greens; Kentucky bluegrass on tees, collars, and bunkers; and a bluegrass blend overseeded with perennial ryegrass, on fairways and roughs.

During construction, Banks used almost all local contractors and construction people, numbering upwards of 25 adults and 50 child "volunteers" as rock pickers. Many local citizens contributed time,

labor, and farm equipment to aid the project. Both Gene and Darrell were constantly on the site, as interested and enthusiastic "superintendents" of the progress.

Contributing to the savings were the hard work and attention to detail of the construction subcontractors, none of whom had ever built a golf course before. The architects note that although it is rare to find local contractors with the capability of building an attractive course, they feel the Bellville construction team — who did most of the earthmoving; installed the irrigation systems; and handled tree moving, finish work, and seeding — did an exceptional job. "The contractors' responsiveness to guidance and pride in the job being done helped hold down costs and really put us over the top in quality," comments Hurdzan, "I think the finished golf course itself is the best proof of what a committed team can do."

Course construction started on May 17, 1975, and was completed by September 11, with the probable opening date in early May or June, 1976. Turf seeded as late as mid-September was already well established by mid-November, a situation the owners attribute largely to a double-rate application of a starter-type high phosphorus fertilizer. "Greens fertilizer with micro-nutrients seems to have the balance needed to make up for the lack of these nutrients in most new greens, especially high-sand greens like these," Dick Warner commented.

Much of the success in reaching the goals Banks set for the course came from high quality and good organization that would contribute to a prompt and substantial return on investment.

Gene and Darrell Banks — and the residents of Bellville who have participated in the project — are justifiably proud they've been able to bring modestly-priced golf to the community. It started 25 years ago with one man's dream, and within a few short months has become a reality: a course that can give experienced golfers many enjoyable hours, and can introduce a growing number of beginners to the pleasures of the same. □



Taking advantage of nature: During construction of the Bellville Project, repositioning of existing trees helped give the course an established look. At the same time, the owners acquired a substantial savings over the cost of replacement stock. Several hundred white pines were transplanted.