

Sod a whole golf course?

Using park personnel with federally subsidized salaries made a great difference in the cost of sodding the Springfield Oaks course.

"We had the unfortunate experience of watching our seed beds washed out three consecutive times after we built them. This left us with an unplayable golf course after the first year."

That was the problem facing the Oakland County (Mich.) Parks and Recreation Commission, according to commission Chief of Design and Development Robert Bomia, since it purchased 100 acres of land for the Springfield Oaks County Park.

After acquisition in 1966 of an original 170 acres which included an old 9-hole golf course, plans were made to develop the 3,000-yard par 36 facility into a 6,300-yard par 72 course. The additional acreage was purchased in 1969-70, new designs for the course were drawn in 1973-74, and the back nine holes were constructed.

From the beginning, however, the expanded course was plagued with adverse site conditions — mainly a gravelly substance which made it unsuitable for seeding. Backed by the Shiawassee River mill pond, the scenic terrain on the back nine is extremely hilly and uneven. Heavy rains habitually washed the topsoil from

modified slopes, creating the condition Bomia noted above.

Sod, not seed

"Due to our experience with this soil condition," Bomia continued, "when we began renovation of the existing nine holes, our contractor would no longer guarantee the growth of grass seed unless we supplied additional topsoil. Even with the additional topsoil, there was no guarantee that rain wouldn't wash the soil away again."

The commission's solution was logical, albeit unusual. It was decided to sod the entire nine holes: fairways, tees, and greens.

"When we first announced our innovative plan to sod the course," Eric Reickel, director of the parks commission, said, "we met with a lot of skepticism from the golf industry. Most people thought sodding would be outrageously expensive.

"You have to remember, however, that we had access to our own manpower to lay the sod. Comparing time, cost, and protection of the ground surface, we found that sodding was a



Time is money
 no job is too big

“A total of 161,000 square yards of sod was used to cover the nine holes. The only areas done with topsoil and seed were in the rough.”



much better and more economical solution than new topsoil and seed. We were able to save the county over \$40,000.”

Topsoil for the nine holes would have cost Oakland County taxpayers \$96,500, while seeding of greens, tees, and fairways, plus stone removal, would have cost \$20,274. Total cost for this method would have been \$116,774.

In contrast, sod for the fairways and greens, with the use of park personnel funded by a federal CETA program to lay the sod, cost just \$77,371. The taxpayers were saved \$43,403 and are now able to enjoy a

lovely, grassy golf course that is impervious to rainstorms.

Other advantages

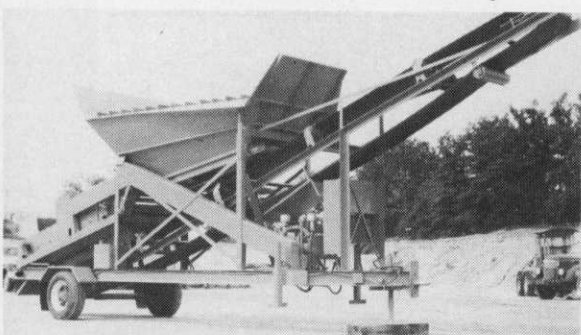
A total of 161,000 square yards of sod was used to cover the nine holes. A mixture of Merion blue, Kentucky blue, Barron blue, and some Park, the sod was purchased from an independent contractor. The only areas done with topsoil and seed were in the rough.

The sodding procedure not only saved money, but the new back nine was opened to the public a year earlier than it would have been under

normal seeding and growth conditions. The sod was laid in the fall of 1975, and the full course opened to the public on July 1, 1976.

Due to the early opening last summer, the finished golf course has reflected increased play. In 1974, the last full summer the 9-hole course was open, park officials recorded 10,755 rounds played during the months of July, August, and September. In 1976 the figure for those same months grew to 15,309 9-hole rounds. Even greater play is expected this coming summer when all 18 holes are open the full season. □

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